



For Faith and Freedom

VOL. II.

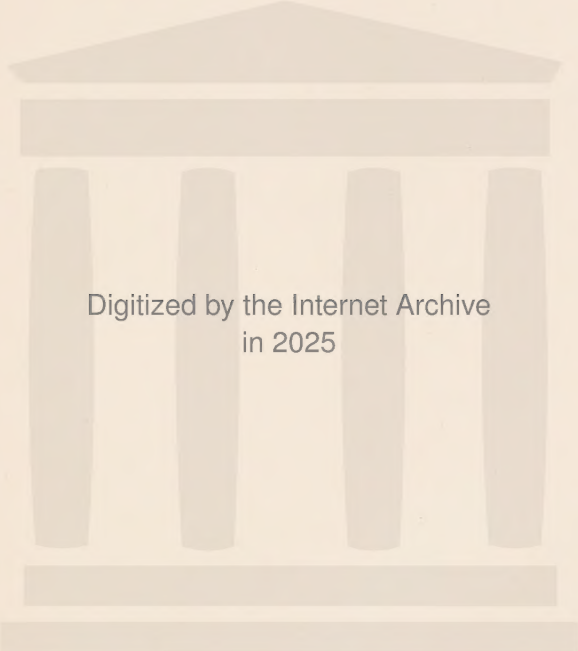
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“ Boys,” I said, “ beware ; if you go up higher you will certainly meet wild men.” ”

For Faith and Freedom

BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF 'DOROTHY FORSTER' 'CHILDREN OF GIBEON'
'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. FORESTIER AND F. WADDY

London

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“BOYS,” I SAID, “BEWARE; IF YOU GO UP
HIGHER YOU WILL CERTAINLY MEET WILD
MEN”’ *Frontispiece*

‘I WAS STANDING AT THE WICKET WAITING
FOR MY BASKET TO BE TAKEN IN’ . . . *To face p. 182*

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FOR FAITH AND FREEDOM.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MAIDS OF TAUNTON.



NEXT day was made remarkable in our eyes by an event which, though doubtless of less importance

than the enlistment of a dozen recruits, seemed to us a very great thing indeed—namely, the presentation to the Duke of the colours embroidered for him by Susan Blake's schoolgirls. I was myself

permitted to walk with the girls on this occasion, as if I had been one of them, though a stranger to the place, and but newly

arrived—such was the kindness of Susan Blake and her respect for the name of the learned and pious Dr. Comfort Eykin.

At nine of the clock the girls who were to carry the flags began to gather in the school-room. There were twenty-seven in all ; but twelve only were the pupils of Miss Blake. The others were the pupils of Mrs. Musgrave, another school-mistress in the town. I remember not the names of all the girls, but some of them I can still write down. One was Katharine Bovet, daughter of Colonel Bovet : she it was who walked first and named to the Duke those who followed ; there was also Mary Blake, cousin of Susan, who was afterwards thrown into prison with her cousin, but presently was pardoned. Miss Hucker, daughter of Captain Hucker, the Master-Sergemaker who entertained the Duke, was another ; there were three daughters of Captain Herring, two daughters of Mr. Thomas Baker, one of Monmouth's Privy Councillors ; there was Mary Meade, the girl who carried the famous Golden Flag ; and

others whom I have forgotten. When we were assembled, being dressed all in white, and each maid wearing the Monmouth colours, we took our flags and sallied forth. In the street there was almost as great a crowd to look on as the day before, when the Duke rode in ; and certainly it was a very pretty sight to see. First marched a man playing on the crowd very briskly ; after him, one who beat a tabor, and one who played a fife ; so that we had music on our march. When the music stopped, we lifted our voices and sang a Psalm altogether ; that done, the crowder began again.

As for the procession, no one surely had ever seen the like of it ! After the music walked six-and-twenty maids, the youngest eight, and the eldest not more than twelve. They marched two by two, very orderly, all dressed in white with blue favours, and every girl carrying in her hands a flag of silk embroidered by herself, assisted by Miss Blake or some other older person, with devices appropriate to the nature of the enterprise in hand.

For one flag had upon it, truly figured in scarlet silk, an open Bible, because it was for liberty to read and expound that book that the men were going forth to fight. Upon another was embroidered a great cross ; upon a third were the arms of the Duke ; a fourth bore upon it, to show the zeal of the people, the arms of the town of Taunton ; and a fifth had both a Bible and a drawn sword ; and so forth, every one with a legend embroidered upon it plain for all to read. The flags were affixed to stout white staves, and as the maids walked apart from each other and at a due distance, the flags all flying in the wind made a pretty sight indeed ; so that some of the women who looked on shed tears. Among the flags was one which I needs must mention, because, unless the device was communicated by some person deep in the Duke's counsels, it most strangely jumped with the event of the following day. Mary Meade, poor child ! carried it. We called it the Golden Flag, because it had a crown worked in gold thread upon it and the letters 'J.R.' A fringe of lace was sewn

round it, so that it was the richest flag of all. What could the Crown with the letters 'J.R.' mean, but that James, Duke of Monmouth, would shortly assume the Crown of these three kingdoms ?

Last of all walked Miss Susan Blake, and I by her side. She bore in one hand a Bible bound in red leather stamped with gold, and in the other a naked sword.

The Duke came forth to meet us, standing bareheaded before the porch. There were standing beside and behind him, the Lord Grey, his two Chaplains, Dr. Hooke and Mr. Ferguson, my father, Mr. Larke, the Baptist minister of Lyme Regis (he wore a corslet and carried a sword), and the Colonels of his regiments. His bodyguard were drawn up across the street, looking brave and splendid in their new favours. The varlets waited beyond with the horses for the Duke's party. Who, to look upon the martial array, the bravery of the Guard, the gallant bearing of all, the confidence in their looks, and the presence, which should surely bring a blessing, of the ministers

of religion, would think that all this pomp and promise could be shattered at a single blow ?

As each girl advanced in her turn, she knelt on one knee and offered her flag, bowing her head (we had practised this ceremony several times at the school, until we were all quite perfect in our parts). Then the Duke stepped forward and raised her, tenderly kissing her. Then she stood aside, holding her flag still in her hands.

My turn—because I had no flag—came last but one, Miss Susan Blake being the last. Now—I hope it was not folly, or a vainglorious desire to be distinguished by any particular notice of his Grace—I could not refrain from hanging the ring, which the Duke had given me at Ilchester five years ago, outside my dress by a blue ribbon. Miss Blake, to whom I had told the story of the ring, advised me to do so, partly to show my loyalty to the Duke, and partly because it was a pretty thing and one which some women would much desire to possess.

Miss Katharine Bovet informed the Duke

that I was the daughter of the learned preacher, Dr. Comfort Eykin. When I knelt he raised me. Then, as he was about to salute me, his eyes fell upon the ring, and he looked first at me and then at the ring.

‘Madam,’ he said, ‘this ring I ought to know. If I mistake not, there are the initials of “J. S.” upon it?’

‘Sir,’ I replied, ‘the ring was your own. Your Grace was so good as to bestow it upon me in your progress through the town of Ilchester, five years ago.’

‘Gad so!’ he said, laughing; ‘I remember now. ’Twas a sweet and lovely child whom I kissed—and now thou art a sweet and lovely maiden. Art thou truly the daughter of Dr. Comfort Eykin?’—he looked behind him; but my father neither heard nor attended, being wrapped in thought. ‘’Tis strange: his daughter!’ ’Tis indeed wonderful that such a child should——’ Here he stopped. ‘Fair Rose of Somerset I called thee then. Fair Rose of Somerset I call thee again. Why, if I could place thee at the head of my army all

England would certainly follow, as if Helen of Troy or Queen Venus herself did lead.' So he kissed me on the cheek with much warmth—more, indeed, than was necessary to show a gracious and friendly goodwill; and suffered me to step aside. 'Dr. Eykin's daughter!' he repeated, with a kind of wonder. 'How could Dr. Eykin have such a daughter!'

When I told Robin of this gracious salutation, he first turned very red and then he laughed. Then he said that everybody knew the Duke, but he must not attempt any Court freedoms in the Protestant camp; and if he were to try—— Then he broke off short, changed colour again, and then he kissed me, saying that, of course, the Duke meant nothing but kindness, but that, for his own part, he desired not his sweetheart to be kissed by anybody but himself. So I suppose my boy was jealous. But the folly of being jealous of so great a Prince, who could not possibly have the least regard for a simple country maiden, and who had known the great and beautiful Court ladies! It made

me laugh to think that Robin could be so foolish as to be jealous of the Duke.

Then it was Miss Susan Blake's turn. She stepped forward very briskly, and knelt down and placed the Bible in the Duke's left hand and the sword in his right.

'Sir,' she said (speaking the words we had made up and she had learned), 'it is in the name of the women of Taunton—nay, of the women of all England—that I give you the Book of the Word of God, the most precious treasure vouchsafed to man, so that all may learn that you are come for no other purpose than to maintain the right of the English people to search the Scriptures for themselves. I give you also, Sir, a sword with which to defend those rights. In addition, Sir, the women can only give your Grace the offering of their continual prayers in behalf of the Cause, and for the safety and prosperity of your Highness and your army.'

'Madam,' said the Duke, much moved by this spectacle of devotion, 'I am come, believe me, for no other purpose than to defend

the truths contained in this book, and to seal my defence with my blood, if that need be.'

Then the Duke mounted and we marched behind him in single file, each girl led by a soldier, till we came to the camp, when our flags were taken from us and we returned home and took off our white dresses. I confess that I laid mine down with a sigh. White becomes every maiden, and my only wear till then had been of russet brown. And all that day we acted over again—in our talk and in our thoughts—our beautiful procession, and we repeated the condescending words of the Duke, and admired the graciousness of his kisses, and praised each other for our admirable behaviour, and listened, with pleasure unspeakable, while Susan Blake prophesied that we should become immortal by the ceremony of that day.

CHAPTER XIX.

KING MONMOUTH AND HIS CAMP.

NEXT day, the town being thronged with people, and the young men pressing in from all quarters to enrol themselves (over four thousand joined the colours at Taunton alone), another Proclamation was read—that, namely, by which the Duke claimed the throne. Many opinions have been given as to this step. For the Duke's enemies maintain — first, that his mother was never married to King Charles the Second (indeed, there is no doubt that the King always denied the marriage) ; next, that an illegitimate son could never be permitted to sit upon the ancient throne of this realm ; and, thirdly, that in usurping the Crown the Duke broke faith with his friends,

to whom he had solemnly given his word that he would not put forward any such pretensions. Nay, some have gone so far as to allege that he was not the son of Charles at all, but of some other whom they even name ; and they have pointed to his face as showing no resemblance at all to that swarthy and gloomy-looking King. On the other hand, the Duke's friends say that there were in his hands clear proofs of the marriage ; that the promise given to his friends was conditional, and one which could be set aside by circumstances ; that the country gentry, to whom a Republic was most distasteful, were afraid that he designed to re-establish that form of government ; and, further, that his friends were all fully aware, from the beginning, of his intentions.

On these points I know nothing ; but, when a thing has been done, it is idle to spend time in arguing that it was well or ill done. James, Duke of Monmouth, was now James, King of Great Britain and Ireland ; and if we were all rebels before, who had

risen in the name of religion and liberty, I suppose we were all ten times as much rebels now, when we had, in addition, set up another King, and declared King James to be an usurper, and no more than the Duke of York. Nay, that there might be wanting no single circumstance of aggravation, it was in this Proclamation declared that the Duke of York had caused his brother, the late King, to be secretly poisoned. I know not what foundation exists for this accusation ; but I have been told that it gave offence unto many, and that it was an ill-advised thing to say.

The Proclamation was read aloud at the Market Cross by Mr. Tyley, of Taunton, on the Saturday morning, before a great concourse of people. It ended with the words, ‘ We, therefore, the noblemen, gentlemen, and Commons at present assembled, in the names of ourselves and of all the loyal and Protestant noblemen, gentlemen, and Commons of England, in pursuance of our duty and allegiance, and for the delivering of the Kingdom from Popery, tyranny, and oppression, do

recognise, publish, and proclaim the said high and mighty Prince James, Duke of Monmouth, as lawful and rightful Sovereign and King, by the name of James II., by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith. GOD SAVE THE KING !'

After this the Duke was always saluted as King, prayed for as King, and styled 'His Majesty.' He also touched some (as only the King can do) for the king's-evil, and, it is said, wrought many miracles of healing—a thing which, being noised abroad, should have strengthened the faith of the people in him. But the malignity of our enemies caused these cases of healing to be denied, or else explained as fables and inventions of the Duke's friends.

Among the accessions of this day was one which I cannot forbear to mention. It was that of an old soldier who had been one of Cromwell's captains, Colonel Basset by name. He rode in—being a man advanced in years, yet still strong and hale—at the head of a

considerable company raised by himself. 'Twas hoped that his example would be followed by the adhesion of many more of Cromwell's men, but the event proved otherwise. Perhaps, being old Republicans, they were deterred by the Proclamation of Monmouth as King. Perhaps they had grown slothful with age, and were now unwilling to face once more the dangers and fatigues of a campaign. Another recruit was the once-famous Colonel Perrot, who had been engaged with Colonel Blood in the robbery of the Crown Jewels—though the addition of a robber to our army was not a matter of pride. He came, it was afterwards said, because he was desperate, his fortunes broken, and with no other hope than to follow the fortunes of the Duke.

It became known in the course of the day that the army was to march on the Sunday. Therefore, everybody on Saturday evening repaired to the camp: some to bid farewell and Godspeed to their friends, and others to witness the humours of a camp. I was fortu-

nate in having Robin for a companion and protector—the place being rough and the behaviour and language of the men coarse even beyond what one expects at a country fair. The recruits still kept pouring in from all parts ; but, as I have already said, many were disheartened when they found that there were no arms, and went home again. They were not all riotous and disorderly. Some of the men, those, namely, who were older and more sober-minded, we found gathered together in groups, earnestly engaged in conversation.

‘ They are considering the Proclamation,’ said Robin. ‘ Truly, we did not expect that our Duke would so soon become King. They say he is illegitimate. What then ? Let him mount the throne by right of arms, as Oliver Cromwell could have done had he pleased—who asks whether Oliver was illegitimate or no ? The country will not have another Commonwealth—and it will no longer endure a Catholic King. Let us have King Monmouth, then : who is there better ? ’

In all the camp there was none who spoke

with greater cheerfulness and confidence than Robin. Yet he did not disguise from himself that there might be warm work.

‘The King’s troops,’ he said, ‘are closing in all round us. That is certain. Yet, even if they all join, we are still more numerous and in much better heart; of that I am assured. At Wellington, the Duke of Albemarle commands the Devonshire Militia; Lord Churchill is at Chard with the Somerset Regiment; Lord Bath is reported to be marching upon us with the Cornishmen; the Duke of Beaufort hath the Gloucester Militia at Bristol; Lord Pembroke is at Chippenham with the Wiltshire Trainbands; Lord Feversham is on the march with the King’s standing army. What then? are these men Protestants or are they Papists? Answer me that, Sweetheart.’

Alas! had they been true Protestants there would have been such an answer as would have driven King James across the water three years sooner.

The camp was now like a fair, only much

finer and bigger than any fair I have ever seen. That of Lyme Regis could not be compared with it. There were booths where they sold gingerbread, cakes, ale, and cider ; Monmouth favours for the recruits to sew upon their hats or sleeves ; shoes and stockings were sold in some, and even chap-books were displayed. There was a puppet show with Patient Grizzle ; and a stand where a monkey danced. Men and women carried about in baskets last year's withered apples, with Kentish cobs and walnuts ; there were booths where they fried sausages and roasted pork all day long ; tumblers and clowns were performing in others ; painted and dressed-up girls danced in others ; there was a bull-baiting ; a man was making a fiery oration on the Duke's Proclamation : but I saw no one preaching a sermon. There were here and there companies of country lads exercising with pike and halbert ; and others, more advanced, with the loading and firing of their muskets. There were tables at which sat men with cards and dice, gambling : shouting

when they won and cursing when they lost ; others, of more thrifty mind, sat on the ground practising their trade of tailor or cobbler—thus losing no money, though they did go soldiering ; some polished weapons and sharpened swords, pikes, and scythes ; nowhere did we find any reading the Bible, or singing of hymns, or listening to sermons. Save for a few groups of sober men of whom I have spoken, the love of amusement carried all away ; and the officers of the army, who might have turned them back to sober thought, were not visible. Everywhere noise ; everywhere beating of drums, playing of pipes, singing of songs, bawling and laughing. Among the men there ran about a number of saucy gipsy girls, their brown faces showing under red kerchiefs, their black eyes twinkling (truly they are pretty creatures to look upon when they are young ; but they have no religion, and say of themselves that they have no souls). These girls talked with each other in their own language, which none out of their own nation—except the tinker-folk, who

are said to be their cousins—understand. But English they talk very well, and they are so clever that, it is said, they will talk to a Somersetshire man in good broad Somerset, and to a man of Norfolk in his own speech, though he of Norfolk would not understand him of Somerset.

‘They are the vultures,’ said Robin, ‘who follow for prey. Before the battle these women cajole the soldiers out of their money, and after the battle their men rob and even murder the wounded and plunder the dead.’

Then one of them ran and stood before us.

‘Let me tell thy fortune, handsome gentleman? Let me tell thine, fair lady? A sixpence or a groat to cross my palm, Captain, and you shall know all that is to happen.’

Robin laughed, but gave her sixpence.

‘Look me in the face, fair lady’—she spoke good, plain English, this black-eyed wench, though but a moment before she had been talking broad Somerset to a young recruit—‘look me in the face; yes. All is not

smooth. He loves you ; but there will be separation and trouble. One comes between, a big man with a red face ; he parts you. There is a wedding, I see your ladyship plain. Why, you are crying at it, you cry all the time ; but I do not see this gentleman. Then there is another wedding—yes, another—and I see you at both. You will be twice married. Yet, be of good heart, fair lady.’

She turned away and ran after another couple, no doubt with much the same tale.

‘ How should there be a wedding,’ I asked, ‘ if I am there and you not there, Robin—and I to be crying ? And how could I—oh ! Robin—how could I be married twice ? ’

‘ Nay, Sweetheart, she could not tell what wedding it was. She only uttered the gibberish of her trade ; I am sorry that I wasted a sixpence upon her.’

‘ Robin, is it magic that they practise—these gipsies ? Do they traffic with the Devil ? We ought not to suffer witches to live amongst us.’

‘Most are of opinion that they have no other magic than the art of guessing, which they learn to do very quickly, putting things together, from their appearance ; so that if brother and sister walk out together they are taken to be lovers, and promised a happy marriage and many children.’

That may be so, and perhaps the fortune told by this gipsy was only guess-work. But I cannot believe it ; for the event proved that she had in reality possessed an exact knowledge of what was about to happen.

Some of the gipsy women—but these were the older women, who had lost their good looks, though not their impudence—were singing songs, and those, as Robin told me, songs not fit to be sung ; and one old crone, sitting before her tent beside a roaring wood-fire over which hung a great saucepan, sold charms against shot and steel. The lads bought these greedily, giving sixpence apiece for them ; so that the old witch must have made a sackful of money. They came and

looked on shyly. Then one would say to the other, ‘What thinkest, lad? Is there aught in it?’ And the other would say, ‘Truly, I know not; but she is a proper witch, and I’ll buy one. We may have to fight. Best make sure of a whole skin.’ And so he bought one, and then all bought. The husbands of the gipsy women were engaged, meantime, we understood, in robbing the farm-yards in the neighbourhood, the blame being afterwards laid upon our honest soldiers.

Then there was a ballad-monger singing a song about a man and a broom, and selling it (to those who would buy) printed on a long slip of paper. The first lines were—

There was an old man and he lived in a wood,
And his trade it was making a broom,

but I heard no more, because Robin hurried me away. Then there were some who had drunk too much cider or beer, and were now reeling about with stupid faces and glassy eyes; there were some who were lying speechless or asleep upon the grass; and

some were cooking supper over fires after the manner of the gipsies.

‘I have seen enough, Robin,’ I said. ‘Alas for sacred Religion if these are her defenders !’

‘ ’Tis always so,’ said Robin, ‘in time of war. We must encourage our men to keep up their hearts. Should we be constantly reminding them that to-morrow half of them may be lying dead on the battle-field ? Then they would mope and hang their heads, and would presently desert.’

‘One need not preach of death, but one should preach of godliness and of sober joy. Look but at those gipsy wenches and those lads rolling about drunk. Are these things decent ? If they escape the dangers of war, will it make them happy to look back upon the memory of this camp ? Is it fit preparation to meet their Maker ?’

‘In times of peace, sweet Saint, these lads remember easily that in the midst of life we are in death, and they govern themselves accordingly. In times of war every man

hopes for his own part to escape with a whole skin, though his neighbour fall. That is why we are all so blithe and jolly. Let us now go home, before the night falls and the mirth becomes riotous and unseemly.'

We passed a large booth, whence there issued sounds of singing. It was a roofless inclosure of canvas. Some ale-house man of Taunton had set it up. Robin drew aside the canvas door.

'Look in,' he said. 'See the brave defenders of Religion keeping up their hearts.'

It was furnished with benches and rough tables : at one end were casks. The benches were crowded with soldiers, every man with a pot before him, and the varlets were running backwards and forwards with cans of ale and cider. Most of the men were smoking pipes of tobacco, and they were singing a song which seemed to have no end. One bawled the lines, and when it came to the 'Let the hautboys play!' and the 'Huzza !' they all roared out together :—

Now, now, the Duke's health,
And let the hautboys play,
While the troops on their march shall roar
Huzza ! huzza ! huzza !

Now, now, the Duke's health,
And let the hautboys play,
While the drums and the trumpets sound from
the shore
Huzza ! huzza ! huzza

They sang this verse several times over.
Then another began—

Now, now, Lord Grey's health,
And let the hautboys play,
While the troops on their march shall roar
Huzza ! huzza ! huzza

Now, now, Lord Grey's health,
And let the hautboys play,
While the drums and the trumpets sound from
the shore
Huzza ! huzza ! huzza !

Next a third voice took it up—

Now, now, the Colonel's health,
And let the hautboys play,

and then a fourth and a fifth, and the last
verse was bawled as lustily and with so much

joy that one would have thought the mere singing would have gotten them the victory. Men are so made, I suppose, that they cannot work together without singing and music to keep up their hearts. Sailors sing when they weigh anchor ; men who unlade ships sing as they carry out the bales ; even Cromwell's Ironsides could not march in silence, but sang Psalms as they marched.

The sun was set and the twilight falling when we left the camp ; and there was no abatement of the roaring and singing, but rather an increase.

‘ They will go on,’ said Robin, ‘ until the drink or their money gives out ; then they will lie down and sleep. You have now seen our camp, Sweetheart. It is not, truth to say, as decorous as a conventicle, nor is the talk so godly as in Sir Christopher’s hall. For rough fellows there must be rough play ; in a month these lads will be veterans ; the singing will have grown stale to them ; the black-eyed gipsy-women will have no more power to charm away their money ; they will

understand the meaning of war; the camp will be sober if it is not religious.'

So we walked homewards, I, for my part, saddened to think in what a spirit of riot these young men, whom I had pictured so full of godly zeal, were preparing to meet the chance of immediate death and judgment.

'Sweet,' said Robin, 'I read thy thoughts in thy troubled eyes. Pray for us. Some will fight none the worse for knowing that there are good women who pray for them.'

We were now back in the town; the streets were still full of people, and no one seemed to think of bed. Presently we passed the Castle Inn; the windows were open, and we could see a great company of gentlemen sitting round a table on which were candles lit and bowls full of strong drink; nearly every man had his pipe at his lips and his glass before him, and one of them was singing to the accompaniment of a guitar. Their faces were red and swollen, as if they had taken too much. At one end of the table sat Humphrey. What? could Humphrey, too,

be a reveller with the rest ? His face, which was gloomy, and his eyes, which were sad, showed that he was not.

‘The officers have supped together,’ said Robin. ‘It may be long before we get such good quarters again. A cup of hipsy and a song in good fellowship, thou wilt not grudge so much ?’

‘Nay,’ I said, ‘’tis all of a piece. Like man, like master. Officers and men alike—all drinking and singing. Is there not one good man in all the army ?’

As I spoke one finished a song at which all laughed, except Humphrey, and drummed the table with their fists and shouted.

Then one who seemed to be the president of the table turned to Humphrey.

‘Doctor,’ he said, ‘thou wilt not drink, thou dost not laugh, and thou hast not sung. Thou must be tried by court-martial, and the sentence of the court is a brimming glass of punch or a song.’

‘Then, gentlemen,’ said Humphrey, smiling, ‘I will give you a song. But

blame me not if you mislike it ; I made the song in praise of the sweetest woman in the world.' He took the guitar and struck the strings. When he began to sing my cheeks flamed and my breath came and went, for I knew the song ; he had given it to me four years ago. Who was the sweetest woman in the world ? Oh ! he made this song for me !—he made this song for me, and none but me ! But these rude revellers would not know that—and I never guessed that the song was for me. How could I think that he would write these extravagances for me ? But poets cannot mean what they say—

As rides the moon in azure skies,
The twinkling stars beside ;
As when in splendour she doth rise,
Their lesser lights they hide.
So beside Celia, when her face we see,
All unregarded other maidens be.

As Helen in the town of Troy
Shone fair beyond all thought,
That to behold her was a joy
By death too poorly bought.
So, when fair Celia deigns the lawn to grace,
All life, all joy, dwells in her lovely face.

As the sweet river floweth by
Green banks and alders tall,
It stayeth not for prayer or sigh,
Nor answereth if we call.
So Celia heeds not though Love cry and weep ;
She heavenward wendeth while we earthward
creep.

The marbled Saint, so cold and pure,
Minds naught of earthly ways ;
Nor can man's gauds entice or lure
That fixed heavenly gaze.
So, Celia, though thou Queen and Empress art,
To heaven, to heaven alone, belongs thy heart.

Now while Humphrey sang this song, a hush fell upon the revellers ; they had expected nothing but a common drinking-song. After the bawling and the noise and the ribaldry 'twas like a breath of fresh air after the closeness of a prison ; or like a drink of pure water to one half dead with thirst.

' Robin.' I said, ' there is one good man in the camp.' I say that while Humphrey sang this song—which, to be sure, was neither a drinking-song, nor a party song, nor a song of wickedness and folly—the company looked

at each other in silence, and neither laughed nor offered to interrupt. Nay, there were signs of grace in some of their faces, which became grave and thoughtful. When Humphrey finished it, he laid down the guitar and rose up with a bow, saying, 'I have sung my song, gentlemen all--and so, good-night!' and walked out of the room.

'Robin,' I said again, 'thank God there is one good man in the camp! I had forgotten Humphrey.'

'Yes,' Robin replied; 'Humphrey is a good man, if ever there was one. But he is glum. Something oppresses him. His eyes are troubled, and he hangs his head; or if he laughs at all, it is as if he would rather cry. Yet all the way home from Holland he was joyful, save when his head was held over the side of the ship. He sang and laughed; he spoke of great things about to happen. I have never known him more happy. And now his face is gloomy, and he sighs when he thinks no one watcheth him. Perhaps, like thee, Sweet, he cannot abide the noise and

riot of the camp. He would fain see every man Bible in hand. To-day he spent two hours with the Duke before the Council, and was with thy father afterwards. 'Tis certain that the Duke hath great confidence in him. Why is he so gloomy? He bitterly reproached me for leaving Sir Christopher, as if he alone had a conscience to obey or honour to remember!'

Humphrey came forth at this moment and stood for a moment on the steps. Then he heaved a great sigh and walked away slowly, with hanging head, not seeing us.

'What is the matter with him?' said Robin. 'Perhaps they flout him for being a physician. These fellows have no respect for learning or for anyone who is not a country gentleman. Well, perhaps when we are on the march he will again pick up his spirits. They are going to sing again. Shall we go, Child?'

But the president called a name, which made me stop a little longer.

'Barnaby!' he cried; 'jolly Captain

Barnaby! Now that Doctor Graveairs hath left us we will begin the night. Barnaby, my hero, thy song. Fill up, gentlemen! The night is young, and to-morrow we march. Captain Barnaby, tip us a sea-song. Silence, gentlemen, for the Captain's song.'

It was my brother that they called upon—no other. He got up from his place at the summons and rose to his feet. Heavens! what a broad man he seemed compared with those who sat beside him! His face was red and his cheeks swollen because of the strong drink he had taken. In his hand he held a full glass of it. Robin called it hipsy—and it is a mixture of wine, brandy, and water with lemon juice and sugar—very heady and strong.

Said not Barnaby that there was one religion for a landsman and another for a sailor? I thought of that as he stood looking round him. If it were so, it would be truly a happy circumstance for most sailors; but I know not on what assurance this belief can be argued. Then Barnaby waved his hand.

‘Yoho! my lads!’ he shouted. ‘The ship’s in port and the crew has gone ashore!’

Then he began to sing in a deep voice which made the glasses ring—

Shut the door—lock the door—

Out of window fling the key.

Hasten; bring me more, bring me more:

Fill it up. Fill it up for me.

The daylight which you think,

The daylight which you think,

The daylight which you think,

’Tis but the candle’s flicker:

The morning star will never wink,

The morning star will never wink,

Till there cometh stint of liquor.

For ’tis tippie, tippie, tippie all around the world, my lads,

And the sun in drink is nightly lapped and curled, my lads,

And to-night let us drink, and to-morrow we’ll to sea;

For ’tis tippie, tippie, tippie—yes, ’tis tippie, tippie tippie—

Makes the world and us to jee.

‘Take me home, Robin,’ I said, ‘I have seen and heard enough. Alas! we have need of all the prayers that we can utter from the depths of our heart, and more!’

CHAPTER XX.

BENJAMIN'S WARNING.



SINCE I HAVE so much to tell, before long, of Benjamin's evil conduct, it must in justice be recorded of him that at this juncture he endeavoured, knowing more of the world than we of Somerset, to warn and dissuade his cousins from taking part in any attempt which should be made in the West. And this he did by means of a letter written to his father. I know not how far the letter might have succeeded, but, unfortunately, it arrived two or three days too late

—when our boys had already joined the insurgents.

‘Honoured Sir,’ he wrote, ‘I write this epistle, being much concerned in spirit lest my grandfather, whose opinions are well known, not only in his own county but also at the Court, should be drawn into, or become cognisant of, some attempt to raise the West Country against their lawful King. It will not be news to you that the Earl of Argyle hath landed in Scotland, where he will meet with such a reception which will doubtless cause him to repent of his rashness. It is also currently reported, and everywhere believed, that the Duke of Monmouth intends immediately to embark and cross the sea, with the design of raising the country in rebellion. The Dissenters, who have been going about with sour looks for five-and-twenty years, venture now to smile and look pleased in anticipation of another civil war. This may follow, but its termination, I think, will not be what they expect.

‘I have also heard that my cousin Hum-

phrey, Dr. Eykin's favourite pupil, who hath never concealed his opinions, hath lately returned from Holland (where the exiles are gathered), and passed through London accompanied by Robin. I have further learned that while in London he visited (but alone, without Robin's knowledge) many of those who are known to be friends of the Duke and red-hot Protestants. Wherefore, I greatly fear that he hath been in correspondence with the exiles, and is cognisant of their designs, and may even be their messenger to announce the intentions of his Protestant champion. Certain I am that, should any chance occur of striking a blow for freedom of worship, my cousin, though he is weak and of slender frame, will join the attempt. He will also endeavour to draw after him everyone in his power. Therefore, my dear father, use all your influence to withstand him, and, if he must for his own part plunge into ruin, persuade my grandfather and my cousin Robin to stay quiet at home.

‘I hear it on the best authority that the

temper of the country, and especially in your part of it, hath been carefully studied by the Government, and is perfectly well known. Those who would risk life and lands for the Duke of Monmouth are few indeed. He may, perhaps, draw a rabble after him, but no more. The fat tradesmen, who most long for the conventicle, will not fight, though they may pray for him. The country gentlemen may be Protestants, but they are mostly for Church and King. It is quite true that his Majesty is a Roman Catholic, nor hath he ever concealed or denied his religion, being one who scorns deception. It is also true that his profession of faith is a stumbling-block to many who find it hard to reconcile their teaching of Non-Resistance and Divine Right with the introduction of the Mass and the Romish Priest. But the country hath not yet forgotten the sour rule of the Independent; and, rather than suffer him to return, the people will endure a vast deal of Royal Prerogative.

‘It is absolutely certain—assure my grand-

father on this point, whatever he may learn from Humphrey—that the better sort will never join Monmouth, whether he comes as another Cromwell to restore the Commonwealth, or whether he aspires to the Crown and dares to maintain—a thing which King Charles did always stoutly deny—that his mother was married. Is it credible that the ancient throne of these Kingdoms should be usurped by the base-born son of Lucy Waters ?

‘ I had last night the honour of drinking a bottle of wine with that great lawyer, Sir George Jeffreys. The conversation turned upon this subject. We were assured by the Judge that the affections of the people are wholly with the King ; that the liberty of worship which he demands for himself he will also willingly extend to the country, so that the last pretence of reason for disaffection shall be removed. Why should the people run after Monmouth, when, if he were successful, he could give no more than the King is ready to give ? I was also privately warned by Sir George that

my grandfather's name is unfavourably noted, and his actions and speeches will be watched. Therefore, Sir, I humbly beg that you will represent to him and to my cousins, and to Dr. Eykin himself, first the hopelessness of any such enterprise and the certainty of defeat ; and next the punishment which will fall upon the rebels and upon those who lend them any countenance. Men of such a temper as Dr. Comfort Eykin will, doubtless, go to the scaffold willingly with their mouths full of the texts which they apply to themselves on all occasions. For such I have no pity, yet for the sake of his wife and daughter I would willingly, if I could, save him from the fate which will be his if Monmouth lands in the West. And as for my grandfather, 'tis terrible to think of his white hairs blown by the breeze while the hangman adjusts the knot ; and I should shudder to see the blackened limbs of Robin stuck upon poles for all the world to see.

‘ It is my present intention, if my affairs permit, to follow my fortunes on the Western

Circuit in the autumn, when I shall endeavour to ride from Taunton or Exeter to Bradford Orcas. My practice grows apace. Daily I am heard in the Courts. The Judges already know me and listen to me. The juries begin to feel the weight of my arguments. The attorneys besiege my chambers. For a junior I am in great demand. It is my prayer that you, Sir, may live to see your son Chancellor and a Peer of the realm. Less than Lord Chancellor will not content me. As for marriage, that might hinder my rise ; I shall not marry yet. There is in your parish, Sir, one who knows my mind upon this matter. I shall be pleased to think that you will assure her—you know very well whom I mean—that my mind is unaltered, and that my way is now plain before me. So, I remain, with dutiful respect, your obedient son,

‘ B. B.’

This letter arrived, I say, after the departure of Robin with his company of village lads.

When Mr. Boscorel had read it slowly and twice over, so as to lose no point of the contents, he sat and pondered awhile. Then he arose, and with troubled face he sought Sir Christopher, to whom he read it through. Then he waited for Sir Christopher to speak.

‘The boy writes,’ said his Honour, after a while, ‘according to his lights. He repeats the things he hears said by his boon companions. Nay, more, he believes them. Why, it is easy for them to swear loyalty and to declare in their cups where the affections of the people are placed.’

‘Sir Christopher, what is done cannot be undone. The boys are gone—alas!—but you still remain. Take heed for a space what you say as well as what you do.’

‘How should they know the temper of the country?’ Sir Christopher went on, regardless. ‘What doth the foul-mouthed profligate Sir George Jeffreys know concerning sober and godly people? These are not noisy Templars; they are not profligates of the Court; they are not haunters of tavern

and pot-house ; they are not those who frequent the play-house. Judge Jeffreys knows none such. They are lovers of the Word of God ; they wish to worship after their fashion ; they hate the Pope and all his works. Let us hear what these men say upon the matter.'

'Nay,' said Mr. Boscorel ; 'I care not greatly what they say. But would to God the boys were safe returned.'

'Benjamin means well,' Sir Christopher went on. 'I take this warning kindly ; he means well. It pleases me that in the midst of the work and the feasting, which he loves, he thinks upon us. Tell him, son-in-law, that I thank him for his letter. It shows that he hath preserved a good heart.'

'As for his good heart'—Mr. Boscorel stroked his nose with his forefinger—'so long as Benjamin gets what he wants—which is Benjamin's mess, and five times the mess of any other—there is no doubt of his good heart.'

'Worse things than these,' said Sir

Christopher, 'were said of us when the civil wars began. The King's troops would ride us down ; the country would not join us ; those of us who were not shot or cut down in the field would be afterwards hanged, drawn, and quartered. Yet we drove the King from his throne.'

'And then another King came back again. So we go up, and so we go down. But about this expedition and about these boys my mind misgives me.'

'Son-in-law,' Sir Christopher said solemnly, 'I am now old, and the eyes of my mind are dim, so that I no longer discern the signs of the times, or follow the current of the stream : moreover, we hear but little news, so that I cannot even see any of those signs. Yet to men in old age, before they pass away to the rest provided by the Lord, there cometh sometimes a vision by which they are enabled to see clearly when younger men are still groping their way in a kind of twilight. Monmouth hath landed ; my boys are with him ; they are rebels ; should the

rising fail, their lives are forfeit ; and that of my dear friend Dr. Comfort Eykin's—yea, and my life as well belike, because I have been a consenting party. Ruin and death will in that event fall upon all of us. Whether it will so happen I know not, nor do I weigh the chance of that event against the voice of conscience, duty, and honour. My boys have obeyed that voice ; they have gone forth to conquer or to die. My vision doth not tell me what will happen to them. But it shows me the priest flying from the country, the King flying from the throne, and that fair angel whom we call Freedom of Conscience returning to bless the land. To know that the laws of God will triumph—ought not that to reconcile a man, already seventy-five years of age, to death, even a death upon the gallows ? What matter for this earthly body so that it be spent until the end in the service of the Lord ?'

CHAPTER XXI.

WE WAIT FOR THE END.

I HAVE said that my father from the beginning unto the end of this business was as one beside himself, being in an ecstasy or rapture of mind inso-much that he heeded nothing. The letters he sent out to his friends, the Nonconformists, either brought no answer or else they heaped loads of trouble, being intercepted and read, upon those to whom they were addressed. But he was not moved. The defection of his friends and of the gentry caused him no uneasiness. Nay, he even closed his eyes and ears to the drinking, the profane oaths, and the riotous living in the camp. Others there were, like-minded with himself, who saw the hand of the Lord in this enterprise, and

thought that it would succeed by a miracle. The desertions of the men, which afterwards followed, and the defection of those who should have joined—these things were but the weeding of the host, which should be still further weeded—as in a well-known chapter in the Book of Judges—until none but the righteous should be left behind. These things he preached daily, and with mighty fervour, to all who would listen ; but these were few in number.

As regards his wife and daughter he took no thought for them at all, being wholly enwrapped in his work ; he did not so much as ask if we had money—to be sure, for five-and-twenty years he had never asked that question—or if we were safely bestowed ; or if we were well. Never have I seen any man so careless of all earthly affections when he considered the work of the Lord. But when the time came for the army to march, what were we to do ? Where should we be bestowed ?

‘As to following the army,’ said Robin,

‘that is absurd. We know not whither we may march or what the course of events may order. You cannot go home without an armed escort, for the country is up; the Clubmen are out everywhere to protect their cattle and horses, a rough and rude folk they would be to meet; and the gipsies are robbing and plundering. Can you stay here until we come back, or until the country hath settled down again?’

Miss Blake generously promised that we should stay with her as long as we chose, adding many kind things about myself, out of friendship and a good heart; and so it was resolved that we should remain in Taunton, where no harm could befall us, while my father still accompanied the army to exhort the soldiers.

‘I will take care of him,’ said Barnaby. ‘He shall not preach of a morning till he hath taken breakfast, nor shall he go to bed until he hath had his supper. So long as the provisions last out he shall have his ration. After that I cannot say. Maybe we shall all

go on short commons, as hath happened to me already ; and, truth to tell, I love it not. All these things belong to the voyage, and are part of our luck. Farewell, therefore, mother. Heart up !—all will go well ! Kiss me, Sis ; we shall all come back again. Never fear. King Monmouth shall be crowned in Westminster. Dad shall be Archbishop of Canterbury, and I shall be Captain of a King's ship. All our fortunes shall be made, and you, Sis, shall have a great estate, and shall marry whom you please—Robin or another. As for the gentry who have not come forward, hang 'em, we'll divide their estates between us and so change places, and they will be so astonished at not being shot for cowardice that they will rejoice and be glad to clean our boots. Thus shall we all be happy.'

So they marched away, Monmouth being now at the head of an army seven thousand strong, and all in such spirits that you would have thought nothing could withstand them. And when I consider, and remember how

that army marched away, with the cheers of the men and the laughter and jokes of the young recruits, the tears run down my cheeks for thinking how their joy was turned to mourning, and life was exchanged for death. The last I saw of Robin was that he was turning in his saddle to wave his hand, his face full of confidence and joy. The only gloomy face in the whole army that morning was the face of Humphrey. Afterwards I learned that almost from the beginning he foresaw certain disaster. In the first place, none of those on whom the exiles of Holland had relied came into camp. These were the backbone of the Protestant party—the sturdy blood that had been freely shed against Charles I. This was a bitter disappointment. Next, he saw in the army nothing but a rabble of country lads, with such officers as Captain Hucker, the Sergemaker, instead of the country gentlemen, with their troops, as had been expected ; and from the beginning he distrusted the leaders—even the Duke himself. So he hung his head and laughed not with the rest. But his

doubts he kept locked up in his own heart. Robin knew none of them.

It was a pretty sight to see the Taunton maids walking out for a mile and more with their lovers who had joined Monmouth. They walked hand-in-hand with the men ; they wore the Monmouth favours ; they had no more doubt or fear of the event than their sweethearts. Those who visit Taunton now may see these women (now grown old) creeping about the streets lonely and sorrowful, mindful still of that Sunday morning when they saw their lovers for the last time.

When I consider the history of this expedition I am amazed that it did not succeed. It was, surely, by a special judgment of God that the victory was withheld from Monmouth and reserved for William. I say not (presumptuously) that the judgment was pronounced against the Duke on account of his sinful life, but I think it was the will of Heaven that the country should endure for three years the presence of a Prince who was continually seeking to advance the Catholic

religion. The people were not yet ripe, perhaps, for that universal disgust which caused them without bloodshed (in this island at least) to pull down King James from his throne. When, I say, I consider the temper and the courage of that great army which left Taunton, greater than any which the King could bring against it; when I consider the multitudes who flocked to the standard at Bridgwater, I am lost in wonder at the event.

From Sunday the 21st, when the army marched out of Taunton, till the news came of their rout on Sedgemoor, we heard nothing certain about them. On Tuesday the Duke of Albemarle, hearing that the army had gone, occupied Taunton with the Militia, and there were some who expected severities on account of the welcome given to the Duke and the recruits whom he obtained here. But there were no acts of revenge that I heard of—and, indeed, he did not stay long in the town. As for us, we remained under the shelter of Miss Blake's roof, and daily expected news of some great and signal victory. But none came, save one

letter. Every day we looked for this news, and every day we planned and laid down the victorious march for our army.

‘ They will first occupy Bristol,’ said Miss Blake. ‘ That is certain, because there are many stout Protestants in Bristol, and the place is important. Once master of that great city, our King will get possession of ships, and so will have a fleet. There are, no doubt, plenty of arms in the town, with which he will be able to equip an army ten times greater than that which he now has. Then, with—say, thirty thousand men—he will march on London. The Militia will, of course, lay down their arms or desert at the approach of this great and resolute army. The King’s regiments will prove, I expect, to be Protestants, every man. Oxford will open her gates, London will send out her train-bands to welcome the Deliverer, and so our King will enter in triumph and be crowned at Westminster Abbey, one King James succeeding another. Then there shall be restored to this distracted country’—being a schoolmistress Miss Blake

could use language worthy of the dignity of history—‘the blessings of religious freedom ; and the pure Word of God, stripped of superstitious additions made by man, shall be preached through the length and breadth of the land.’

‘What shall be done,’ I asked, ‘with the Bishops ?’

‘They shall be suffered to remain,’ she said, speaking with a voice of authority, ‘for those congregations which desire a prelacy, but stripped of their titles and of their vast revenues. We will not persecute, but we will never suffer one Church to lord it over another. Oh ! when will the news come ? Where is the army now ?’

The letter of which I have spoken was from Robin.

‘Sweetheart,’ he said, ‘all goes well so far. At Bridgwater we have received a welcome only second to that of Taunton. The Mayor and Aldermen proclaimed our King at the High Cross, and the people have sent to the camp great store of provisions and arms

of all kinds. We are now six regiments of foot with a thousand cavalry, besides the King's own bodyguard. We have many good friends at Bridgwater, especially one, Mr. Roger Hoar, who is a rich merchant of the place, and is very zealous in the cause. Your father preached on Sunday evening from the text, Deuteronomy vii. 5—"Ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire." It was a most moving discourse, which fired the hearts of all who heard it.

‘They say that our chief is downhearted because the nobility and gentry have not come in. They only wait for the first victory, after which they will come in by hundreds. But some of our men look forward to depriving them of their estates and dividing them among themselves : and already the Colonels and Majors are beginning to reckon up the great rewards which await them. As for me, there is but one reward for which I pray—namely to return unto Bradford Orcas and to the arms

of my sweet saint. Lord Churchill is reported to be at Chard ; there has been a brush in the Forest of Neroche between the scouts, and it is said that all the roads are guarded so that recruits shall be arrested or at least driven back. Perhaps this is the reason why the gentry sit down. Barnaby says that so far there have been provisions enough and to spare ; and he hopes the present plenty may continue. No ship's crew can fight, he says, on half rations. Our march will be on Bristol. I hope and believe that when we have gotten that great town our end is sure. Humphrey continueth glum.'

Many women there were who passed that time in prayer, continually offering up supplications on behalf of husband, brether, lover or son. But at Taunton the Vicar, one Walter Harte, a zealous High Churchman, came forth from hiding, and, with the magistrates, said prayers daily for King James II.

To tell what follows is to renew a time of agony unspeakable. Yet must it be told. Farewell, happy days of hope and confidence!

Farewell, the sweet exchange of dreams !
Farewell to our lovely hero, the gracious Duke ! All the troubles that man's mind can conceive were permitted to be rained upon our heads—defeat, wounds, death, prison—nay, for me such a thing as no one could have expected or even feared—such a fate as never entered the mind of man to invent.

When the Duke marched out of Bridgwater, across Sedgemoor to Glastonbury, the weather, which had been hot and fine, became cold and rainy, which made the men uncomfortable. At Glastonbury they camped in the ruins of the old abbey. Thence they went to Shepton Mallet, the spirits of the men still being high. From Shepton Mallet they marched to a place called Pensford, only five miles from Bristol. Here they heard that the bridge over the Avon at Keynsham was broken down. This being presently repaired, the army marched across. They were then within easy reach of Bristol.

And now began the disasters of the enterprise. Up to this time everything had prospered. Had the Duke boldly attacked

Bristol—I speak not of my own wisdom, having none in such matters, but from others wisdom—he would have encountered no more than twenty companies or thereabouts of Militia, and a regiment of two hundred and fifty horse. Moreover, Bristol was full of Dissenters, who wanted nothing but encouragement to join the Protestant champion. Not only the Duke's friends, but also his enemies, agree in declaring that it wanted nothing but courage to take that great, rich, and populous city, where he would have found everything that he wanted—men and money, arms and ammunition. I cannot but think that for his sins, or for the sins of the nation, a judicial blindness was caused to fall upon the Duke, so that he chose, of two ways open to him, that which led to his destruction. In short, he turned away from Bristol, and drew up his forces against Bath. When he summoned that city to surrender, they shot his herald, and scoffed at him. Then, instead of taking the town, the Duke retired to Philip's Norton, where, 'tis said, he expected

some great reinforcements. But none came ; and he now grew greatly dejected, showing his dejection in his face, which could conceal nothing. Yet he fought an action with his half-brother, the Duke of Grafton, in which he was victorious, a thing which ought to have helped him. In this action Lieutenant Blake, Miss Blake's cousin, was killed. From Philip's Norton the army marched to Frome, and here such was the general despondency that two thousand men—a third of the whole army—deserted in the night and returned to their own homes. I think, also, it was at Frome that they learned the news of Lord Argyle's discomfiture.

Then a council was held, at which it was proposed that the army should be disbanded and ordered to return, seeing that the King had proclaimed a pardon to all who would peacefully lay down their arms and return home ; and that the Duke, with Lord Grey, and those who would be certainly exempted from that pardon, should make the best of their way out of the country.

Alas! here was a way open to the safety of all those poor men ; but again was the Duke permitted to choose the other way—that, namely, which led to the destruction of his army and himself. Yet they say that he himself recommended the safer course. He must have known that he wanted arms and ammunition ; that his men were deserting ; and that no more recruits came in. Colonel Venner, one of his principal men, was at this juncture sent away to Holland in order to get assistance in arms and money. And the King's proclamation of pardon was carefully kept from the knowledge of the soldiers.

On July the 4th the army returned to Bridgwater, and now Dr. Hooke, Chaplain to the army, and some of the officers were sent away secretly in order to raise an insurrection in London and elsewhere ; the only hope being that risings in various parts would call away some of the King's forces from the West. Some of the Taunton men in the army rode from Bridgwater to see their friends. But we women (who, for the most

part, remained at home) learned no news save that as yet there had been no signal victory : we did not hear of the large desertions nor of the Duke's despondency. Therefore, we continued in our fool's paradise and looked every day for some great and crowning mercy. Those who are on the side of the Lord are always expecting some special interference ; whereas, they ought to be satisfied with being on the right side, whether victory or defeat be intended for them. In this enterprise I doubt not that those godly men (there were, I dare say, some godly men) who fell in battle or were afterwards executed, received their reward, and that a far, far greater reward than their conduct deserved—for who can measure the short agony of death beside the everlasting life of glory and joy unspeakable?

The last day of this fatal expedition was Sunday, the fifth day of July : so that it took no more than three weeks in all between its first beginning and its failure. Only three weeks ! But how much longer was it before the punishment and the expiation were con-

cluded? Nay, are they even yet concluded, when thousands of innocent women and children still go in poverty and mourning for the loss of those who should have worked for them?

In the morning my father preached to the soldiers on the text (Joshua xxii. 22), ‘The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, He knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, save us not this day.’

And now the time was come when the last battle was to be fought.

The Earl of Feversham, who had been at Somerton, marched this day across Sedgemoor and encamped at Weston Zoyland, which is but five or six miles from Bridgwater.

Now it chanced that one William Sparke, of Chedzoy, hearing of this advance, climbed the church tower, and, by aid of a spying-glass, such as sailors use at sea, he discerned clearly the approach of the army and its halt at Weston. Being a wellwisher to the Duke, he sent one of his men, Richard Godfrey by

name, with orders to spy into and learn the position and numbers of the Earl's army, and to carry his information straightway to Bridgwater. This duty the fellow promised, and most faithfully performed.

The Duke had already learned the approach of Lord Feversham, and, being now wellnigh desperate with his continued losses, and seeing his army gradually wasting away, with no fresh recruits, he had resolved upon not waiting to be attacked, but on a retreat northwards, hoping to get across the bridge at Keynsham, and so march into Shropshire and Cheshire, where still he hoped to raise another army. But (says he who hath helped me with this brief account of the expedition) the retreat, which would have been harassed by Lord Feversham's horse, would have turned into flight ; the men would have deserted in all directions ; and when the remains of the army arrived at Keynsham Bridge they would certainly have found it occupied by the Duke of Beaufort.

The carriages were already loaded in readi-

ness for this march ; it was to begin at night-fall ; when the arrival of the man Godfrey, and the news that he brought, caused the Duke to change everything. For he now perceived that such a chance was offered him as had never before occurred since his landing : viz., a night surprise, and, if he were fortunate, the rout of the King's best troops.

It is said that had the Duke shown the same boldness in the matter of Bristol that he showed in this night attack, he would have gained that city first and his own Cause next. Nor did it appear at all a desperate attempt. For, though Lord Feversham had 2500 men with him, horse and foot, with sixteen field-pieces, the Duke had nearly 3000 foot (counting those armed with pikes and scythes) and 600 horse with four field-pieces, and though the King's troops included many companies of Grenadiers, with a battalion of that famous regiment the Coldstream Guards, and some hundred horse of the King's regiment and dragoons, the Duke had with him at least 2000 men well armed and resolute, as the event showed.

Besides this, he had the advantage of the surprise and confusion of a night attack. And in addition, the camp was not entrenched, the troopers had all gone to bed, the foot-soldiers were drinking cider, and the officers were reported to be all drunk.

Therefore, it was resolved that the intended flight into Shropshire should be abandoned, and that the whole matter should be brought to an issue that very night.

Had the attack succeeded, all might yet have gone well with the Duke. His enemies boasted that his raw country lads would be routed at the first charge of regular soldiers ; if he proved the contrary, those who had deserted him would have returned ; those who held aloof would join. It was not the Cause which found men lukewarm ; it was the doubt—and nothing but the doubt—whether the Duke's enterprise would be supported. And I have never heard that any found aught but commendation of the boldness and spirit which brought us to the battle of Sedgemoor.

All that day we spent in quiet meditation, in prayer, in the reading of the Bible, and in godly discourses, and herein I must commend the modesty as well as the piety of Miss Susan Blake, in that she invited my mother, as her elder and the wife of an eminent minister, to conduct the religious exercises, though as the hostess she might have demanded that privilege. We stirred not abroad at all that day. The meeting-houses, which had been opened when the Duke marched in, were now closed again.

In the evening, while we sat together discoursing upon the special mercies vouchsafed to the people of the Lord, a strange thing happened. Nay, I do not say that news may not have reached Taunton already of the Duke's intentions, and of the position of the King's forces. But this seems incredible, since it was not known—except to the Council by whom it was decided—till late in the afternoon, and it was not to be thought that these would hurry to spread the news abroad, and so ruin the whole affair. The window being

open, then, we could hear the voices of those who talked in the street below. Now, there passed two men, and they were talking as they went. Said one—and these were the words we heard—

‘I tell thee that the Duke will have no more to do than to lock the stable doors, and so seize the troopers in their beds.’

We all started and listened. The voice below repeated—

‘I say, Sir, and I have it first hand, that he hath but to lock the stable doors and so seize all the troopers in their beds.’

Then they passed on their way.

Said my mother : ‘My husband hath told me that not only may the conscience be awakened by a word which seemeth chance, but the future may be revealed by words which were perhaps meant in another sense. What we have heard this evening may be a foretelling of victory. My children, let us pray, and so to bed.’

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DAY AFTER THE FIGHT.



It WAS five o'clock when I awoke next morning. Though the hour was so early, I heard a great trampling and running about the streets, and, looking out of window, I

saw a concourse of the townspeople gathered together, listening to one who spoke to them. But in the middle of

his speech they broke away from him and ran to another speaker, and so distractedly, and with such gestures, that they were clearly much moved by some news, the nature of

which I could not guess. For in some faces there was visible the outward show of triumph and joy, and on others there lay plainly visible the look of amazement or stupefaction ; and in the street I saw some women weeping and crying. What had happened? Oh! what had happened? Then, while I was still dressing, there burst into the room Susan Blake, herself but half dressed, her hair flying all abroad, the comb in her hand.

‘ Rejoice ! ’ she cried. ‘ Oh ! rejoice, and give thanks unto the Lord ! What did we hear last night ? That the Duke had but to shut the stable doors and seize the troopers in their beds. Look out of window. See the people running and listening eagerly. Oh ! ’tis the crowning mercy that we have looked for : the Lord hath blown and His enemies are scattered. Remember the strange words we heard last night. What said the unknown man ?—nay, he said it twice : “ The Duke had but to lock the stable doors.” Nay, and yesterday I saw, and last night I heard, the screech-owl thrice—which was meant for the

ruin of our enemies. Oh! Alice, Alice, this is a joyful day !’

‘ But look,’ I said, ‘ they have a downcast look ; they run about as if distracted, and some are wringing their hands ’ ——

‘ ‘Tis with excess of joy,’ she replied, looking out of the window with me, though her hair was flying in the wind. ‘ They are so surprised and so rejoiced that they cannot speak or move.’

‘ But there are women weeping and wailing ; why do they weep ? ’

‘ It is for those who are killed. Needs must in every great victory that some are killed—poor brave fellows !—and some are wounded. Nay, my dear, thou hast three at least at the camp, who are dear to thee ; and God knows I have many. Let us pray that we do not have to weep like those poor women.’

She was so earnest in her looks and words, and I myself so willing to believe, that I doubted no longer.

‘ Listen ! oh ! listen ! ’ she cried, ‘ never,

never before have bells rung a music so joyful to my heart.'

For now the bells of the great tower of St. Mary's began to ring. Clash, clash, clash, all together, as if they were cracking their throats with joy; and at the sound of the bells those men in the street, who seemed to me stupefied as by a heavy blow, put up their hands to their ears and fled as if they could not bear the noise, and the women who wept wrung their hands, and shrieked aloud in anguish, as if the joy of the chimes mocked the sorrow of their hearts.

'Poor creatures!' said Susan. 'From my heart I pity them. But the victory is ours, and now it only remains to offer up our humble prayers and praises to the Throne of all mercy.'

So we knelt and thanked God.

'O Lord! we thank and bless Thee! O Lord! we thank and bless Thee!' cried Susan, the tears of joy and gratitude running down her cheeks.

Outside, the noise of hurrying feet and

voices increased, and more women shrieked, and still the joy-bells clashed and clanged.

‘O Lord ! we thank Thee ! O Lord ! we bless Thee !’ Susan repeated on her knees, her voice broken with her joy and triumph. ’Twas all that she could say.

I declare that at that moment I had no more doubt of the victory than I had of the sunshine. There could be no doubt. The joy-bells were ringing : how should we know that the Rev. Mr. Harte, the Vicar, caused them to be rung, and not our friends ? There could be no manner of doubt. The people running to and fro in the street had heard the news, and were rushing to tell each other and to hear more—the women who wept were mothers or wives of the slain. Again, we had encouraged each other with assurances of our success, so that we were already fully prepared to believe that it had come. Had we not seen a splendid army, seven thousand strong, march out of Taunton town, led by the bravest man and most accomplished soldier in the English nation ? Was not the army on

the Lord's side ? Were we not in a Protestant country ? Were not the very regiments of the King Protestants ? Why go on ? And yet—oh ! sad to think !—even while we knelt and prayed, the army was scattered like a cloud of summer gnats by a shower and a breeze, and hundreds lay dead upon the field, and a thousand men were prisoners ; and many were already hanging in gemmaces upon the gibbets, where they remained till King William's coming suffered them to be taken down ; and the rest were flying in every direction hoping to escape.

‘ O Lord ! we thank Thee ! O Lord ! we bless Thee ! ’

While thus we prayed we heard the door below burst open, and a trampling of a man's boots ; and Susan, hastily rolling up her hair, ran down-stairs, followed by mother and myself.

There stood Barnaby. Thank God ! one of our lads was safe out of the fight. His face and hands were black with powder ; his red coat, which had been so fine, was now

smirched with mud and stained with I know not what—marks of weather, of dust, and of gunpowder; the right-hand side was torn away; he had no hat upon his head, and a bloody clout was tied about his forehead.

‘Barnaby!’ I cried.

‘Captain Barnaby!’ cried Susan, clasping her hands.

‘My son!’ cried mother. ‘Oh! thou art wounded! Quick, Alice, child—a basin of water, quick!’

‘Nay—’tis but a scratch,’ he said; ‘and there is no time for nursing.’

‘When—where—how?’ we all cried together, ‘was the victory won? Is the enemy cut to pieces? Is the war finished?’

‘Victory?’ he repeated, in his slow way—‘what victory? Give me a drink of cider, and if there is a morsel of victual in the house’——

I hurried to bring him both cold meat and bread and a cup full of cider. He began to eat and drink.

‘Why,’ he said, talking between his

mouthfuls, 'if the worst comes 'tis better to face it with a—— Your health, Madam': he finished the cider. 'Another cup, Sister, if you love me: I have neither eaten nor drunk since yesterday at seven o'clock, or thereabouts.' He said no more until he had cleared the dish of the gammon and left nothing but the bone. This he dropped into his pocket. 'When the provisions are out,' he said wisely, 'there is good gnawing in the shankbone of a ham.' Then he drank up the rest of the cider and looked around. 'Victory? Did someone speak of victory?'

'Yes—where was it? Tell us quick!'

'Well, there was in some sort a victory. But the King had it.'

'What mean you, Barnaby? The King had it?—what King?'

'Not King Monmouth. That King is riding away to find some port and get some ship, I take it, which will carry him back to Holland.'

'Barnaby, what is it? Oh! what is it? Tell us all.'

‘All there is to tell, Sister, is that our army is clean cut to pieces, and that those who are not killed or prisoners are making off with what speed they may. As for me, I should have thrown away my coat and picked up some old duds and got off to Bristol and so aboard ship and away, but for Dad.’

‘Barnaby,’ cried my mother, ‘what hath happened to him? Where is he?’

‘I said, mother,’ he replied very slowly, and looking in her face strangely, ‘that I would look after him. didn’t I? Well, when we marched out of Bridgwater at nightfall nothing would serve but he must go too. I think he compared himself with Moses who stood afar off and held up his arms. Never was there any man more eager to get at the enemy than Dad. If he had not been a minister, what a soldier he would have made!’

‘Go on—quick, Barnaby.’

‘I can go, Sister, no quicker than I can. That is quite sure.’

‘Where is he, my son?’ asked my mother.

Barnaby jerked his thumb over his left shoulder.

‘He is over there, and he is safe enough for the present. Well, after the battle was over, and it was no use going on any longer, Monmouth and Lord Grey having already run away’——

‘Run away? Run away?’

‘Run away, Sister. Aboard ship the Captain stands by the crew to the last, and, if they strike, he is prisoner with them. Ashore, the General runs away and leaves his men to find out when they will give over fighting. We fought until there was no more ammunition, and then we ran with the rest. Now, I had not gone far before I saw lying on the moor at my very feet the poor old Dad.’

‘Oh!’

‘He was quite pale, and I thought he was dead. So I was about to leave him when he opened his eyes. “What cheer, Dad?” I asked. He said nothing; so I felt his pulse and found him breathing. “But what cheer, Dad?” I asked him again. “Get up if thou canst,

and come with me." He looked as if he understood me not, and he shut his eyes again. Now, when you run away, the best thing is to run as fast and to run as far as you can. Yet I could not run with Dad lying in the road half dead. So while I tried to think what to do, because the murdering Dragoons were cutting us down in all directions, there came galloping past a pony harnessed to a kind of go-cart, where, I suppose, there had been a barrel or two of cider for the soldiers. The creature was mad with the noise of the guns, and I had much ado to catch him and hold the reins while I lifted Dad into the cart. When I had done that, I ran by the side of the horse and drove him off the road across the moor, which was rough going, but for dear life one must endure much, to North Marton, where I struck the road to Taunton, and brought him safe, so far.'

'Take me to him, Barnaby,' said my mother. 'Take me to him.'

'Why, mother,' he said kindly, 'I know not if 'tis wise. For, look you—if they

catch us, me they will hang or shoot, though Dad they may let go, for he is sped already—and for a tender heart like thine 'twould be a piteous sight to see thy son hanging from a branch with a tight rope round his neck, and thy husband dead on a hand-cart.'

'Barnaby, take me to him!—take me to him!'

'Oh! Is it true? Is it true? Oh! Captain Barnaby, is it really true? Then, why are the bells a-ringing?'

Clash! Clash! Clash! The bells rang out louder and louder. One would have thought the whole town was rejoicing. Yet there were a thousand lads in the army belonging to Taunton town alone, and I know not how many ever came home again.

'They are ringing,' said Barnaby, 'because King Monmouth's army is scattered and the rebellion is all over. Well: we have had our chance and we are undone. Now must we sing small again. Madam,' he said earnestly, addressing Susan, 'if I remember

right, they were your hands that carried the naked sword and the Bible ? ’

‘ Sir, they were my hands. I am proud of that day.’

‘ And they were your scholars who worked the flags and gave them to the Duke that day when you walked in a procession ? ’

‘ They were my scholars,’ she said proudly.

‘ Then, Madam, seeing that we have, if all reports be true, a damned unforgiving kind of King, my advice to you is to follow my example and run. Hoist all sail, Madam, and fly to some port—any port. Fly false colours. When hanging, flogging, branding, and the like amusements set in, I think they will remember the Maids of Taunton. That is my advice, Madam.’

‘ Sir,’ said Susan bravely, though her cheek grew pale when he spoke of floggings and brandings, ‘ I thank you. Whither should I fly? Needs must I stay here and bear whatever affliction the Lord may lay upon me. And, since our Protestant hero is de-

feated, methinks it matters little what becomes of any of us.'

'Why,' Barnaby shook his head, 'King Monmouth is defeated, that is most true ; but we who survive have got ourselves to look after. Sister, get a basket and put into it provisions.'

'What will you have, Barnaby ?'

'Everything that you can find. Cold bacon for choice, and bread, and a bottle of drink if you have any, and—all you can lay hands upon. With your good leave, Madam.'

'Oh! Sir, take all—take all. I would to God that everything I have in the world could be used for the succour of these my friends!' And with that she began to weep and to cry.

I filled a great basket with all that there was in the house and he took it upon his arm. And then we went away with many tears and fond farewells from this kind soul who had done so much for the Cause, and was now about to pay so heavy a penalty for her zeal.

Outside in the street the people recognised Barnaby for one of Monmouth's Captains, and

pressed round him and asked him a thousand questions, but he answered shortly.

‘We were drubbed, I tell you. King Monmouth hath run away. We have all run away. How should I know how many are killed? Every man who doth not wish to be hanged had best run away and hide. The game is up—friend, we are sped. What more can I say? How do I know, in the Devil’s name, whose fault it was? How can I tell, Madam, if your son is safe? If he is safe, make him creep into a hiding-place’—and so on to a hundred who crowded after him and questioned him as to the nature and meaning of the defeat. Seeing that no more news could be got from him, the people left off following us, and we got out of the town on the east side, where the road leads to Ilminster; but it is a bad road and little frequented.

Here Barnaby looked about him carefully to make sure that no one was observing us, and then, finding that no one was within sight, he turned to the right down a grassy lane between hedges.

‘’Tis this way that I brought him,’ he said. ‘Poor old Dad! he can now move neither hand nor foot; and his legs will no more be any use to him. Yet he seemed in no pain, though the jolting of the cart must have shaken him more than a bit.’

The lane led into a field, and that field into another and a smaller one, with a plantation of larches on two sides and a brook shaded with alders on a third side. In one corner was a linney, with a thatched roof supported on wooden pillars in front and closed in at back and sides. It was such a meadow as is used for the pasture of cattle and the keeping of a bull.

At the entrance of this meadow Barnaby stopped and looked about him with approbation.

‘Here,’ he said slowly, ‘is a hiding-place fit for King Monmouth himself. A road unfrequented; the rustics all gone off to the wars—though now, I doubt not, having had their bellyfull of fighting. I suppose there were once cattle in the meadow, but they are

either driven away by the Clubmen for safety, or they have been stolen by the gipsies. No troopers will this day come prying along this road, or if they do search the wood, which is unlikely, they will not look in the linney ; here can we be snug until we make up our minds what course is best.'

'Barnaby.' I said. 'take us to my father without more speech.'

'I have laid him,' he went on, 'upon the bare ground in the linney ; but it is soft and dry lying, and the air is warm, though last night it rained and was cold. He looks happy, mother, and I doubt if he hath any feeling left in his limbs. Once I saw a man shot in the backbone and never move afterwards, but he lived for a bit. Here he is.'

Alas ! lying motionless on his back, his head bare, his white hair lying over his face, his eyes closed, his cheek white, and no sign of life in him except that his breast gently heaved, was my father. Then certain words which he had uttered came back to my memory. 'What matters the end,' were the

words he said, 'if I have freedom of speech for a single day?'

He had enjoyed that freedom for three weeks.

My mother threw herself on her knees beside him and raised his head.

'Ah! my heart,' she cried, 'my dear heart, my husband, have they killed thee? Speak, my dear—speak if thou canst! Art thou in pain? Can we do aught to relieve thee? Oh! is this the end of all?'

But my father made no reply. He opened his eyes, but they did not move: he looked straight before him, but he saw nothing.

And this, until the end, was the burden of all. He spoke no word to show that he knew anyone, or that he was in pain, or that he desired anything. He neither ate nor drank, yet for many weeks longer he continued to live.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN HIDING.

HUS we began our miserable flight. Thus, in silence, we sat in the shade of the linney all the morning. Outside, the blackbird warbled in the wood and the lark sang in the sky. But we sat in silence, not daring so much as to ask each other if those things were real or if we were dreaming a dreadful dream. Still and motionless lay my father's body, as if the body of a dead man. He felt no pain—of that I am assured; it makes me sick even to think that he might have suffered pain from his wound; he had no sense at all of what was going on. Yet once or twice, during the long trance or paralysis into which he had fallen, he opened his lips as if to speak. And he breathed

gently—so that he was not dead. Barnaby, for his part, threw himself upon his face, and, laying his head upon his arm, fell asleep instantly. The place was very quiet ; at the end of the meadow was a brook, and there was a wood upon the other side ; we could hear the prattling of the water over the pebbles ; outside the linney, a great elm-tree stretched out its branches ; presently I saw a squirrel sitting upon one and peering curiously at us, not at all afraid, so still and motionless we were. I remember that I envied the squirrel. He took no thought even for his daily bread. He went not forth to fight. And the hedge-sparrows, no more afraid than if the linney was empty, hopped into the place and began picking about among the straw. And so the hours slowly passed away, and by degrees I began to understand a little better what had happened to us, for at the first shock one could not perceive the extent of the disaster, and we were as in a dream when we followed Barnaby out of the town. The great and splendid army was destroyed ; that gallant

hero, the Duke, was in flight ; those of the soldiers who were not killed or taken prisoners were running hither and thither trying to escape ; my father was wounded, stricken to death, as it seemed, and deprived of power to move, to feel, or to think. While I considered this, I remembered again how he had turned his eyes from gazing into the sky, and asked me what it mattered even if the end would be death to him and ruin unto all of us. And I do firmly believe that at that moment he had an actual vision of the end, and really saw before his eyes the very things that were to come to pass, and that he knew all along what the end would be. Yet he had delivered his soul—why, then, he had obtained his prayer—and by daily exhortation had doubtless done much to keep up the spirit of those in the army who were sober and godly men. Did he also, like Sir Christopher, have another vision which should console and encourage him ? Did he see the time to follow when a greater than the Duke should come and bring with him the deliverance of the country ?

There are certain gracious words with which that vision closes (the last which he did expound to us), the vision, I mean, of the Basket of Summer Fruit. Did those words ring in his mind and comfort him even in the prospect of his own end? Then my thoughts, which were swift and yet beyond my control, left him and considered the case of Barnaby. He had been a Captain in the Green Regiment; he would be hanged, for certain, if he were caught. My sweetheart, my Robin, had also been a Captain in the Duke's army. All the Duke's officers would be hanged if they were caught. But perhaps Robin was already dead—dead on the battlefield—his face white, his hands stiff, blood upon him somewhere, and a cruel wound upon his dear body! Oh, Robin! Yet I shed no tears. Humphrey, who had been one of the Duke's chyrurgeons, he would also be surely hanged if he were caught. Why—since all would be hanged—why not hang mother and me as well, and so an end!

About noon Barnaby began to stir; then he grunted and went to sleep again: presently

he moved once more, then he rolled over on his broad back and went to sleep again. It was not until the sun was quite low that he awoke, sitting up suddenly, and looking about him with quick suspicion, as one who hath been sleeping in the country of an enemy, or where wild beasts are found.

Then he sprang to his feet and shook himself like a dog.

‘Sister,’ he said, ‘thou shouldst have awakened me earlier. I have slept all the day. Well, we are safe, so far.’ Here he looked cautiously out of the linney towards the wood and the road. ‘So far, I say, we are safe. I take it we had best not wait until to-morrow, but budge to-night. For not only will the troopers scour the country, but they will offer rewards ; and the gipsies—ay, and even the country-folk—will hasten to give information out of their greedy hearts. We must budge this very night.’

‘Whither shall we go, Barnaby ?’

He went on as if he had not heard my question.

‘ We shall certainly be safe here for to-night ; but for to-morrow I doubt. Best not run the chance. For to-day their hands are full : they will be hanging the prisoners. Some they will hang first and try afterwards, some they will try first and hang afterwards. What odds, if they are to be hanged in the end ? The cider orchards never had such fruit as they will show this autumn, if the King prove revengeful—as, to judge by his sour face, he will be.’

Here he cursed the King, his sour face, his works and ways, his past, his present, and his future, in round language which I hope his wounded father did not hear.

‘ We must lie snug for a month or two somewhere, until the unlucky Monmouth men will be suffered to return home in peace. Ay ! ’twill be a month and more, I take it, before the country will be left quiet. A month and more—and Dad not able to crawl ! ’

‘ Where shall we lie snug, Barnaby ? ’

‘ That, Sister, is what I am trying to find out. How to lie snug with a couple of women

and a wounded man who cannot move ?
'Twas madness of the poor old Dad to bring thee to the camp, Child. For now we cannot—any of us—part company, and if we stay together, 'twill maybe bring our necks to the halter.'

'Leave us, Barnaby,' I said. 'Oh ! leave us to do what we can for the poor sufferer, and save thyself.'

'Ta, ta, ta, Sister—knowest not what thou sayest. Let me consider. There may be some way of safety. As for provisions now : we have the basket full—enough for two days, say—what the plague did Dad, the poor old man, want with women when fighting was on hand ? When the fighting is done, I grant you, women, with the tobacco and punch, are much in place. Those are pretty songs, now, that I used to sing about women and drink.'

'Barnaby, is this a time to be talking of such things as drink and singing ?'

'All times are good. Nevertheless, all company is not fitting. Wherefore, Sis, I say no more.'

‘ Barnaby, knowest thou aught of Robin ?
Or of Humphrey ? ’

‘ I know nothing. They may be dead ;
they may be wounded and prisoners ; much I
fear, knowing the spirit of the lads, that both
are killed. Nay, I saw Humphrey before the
fight, and he spoke to me ’——

‘ What did Humphrey say ? ’

‘ I asked why he hung his head and looked
so glum, seeing that we were at last going
forth to meet the King’s army. This I said
because I knew Humphrey to be a lad of
mettle, though his arm is thin and his body
is crooked. “ I go heavy, Barnaby,” he said,
speaking low lest others should hear, “ because
I see plainly that, unless some signal success
come to us, this our business will end badly.”
Then he began to talk about the thousands who
were to have been raised all over the country ;
how he himself had brought to the Duke pro-
mises of support gathered all the way from
London to Bradford Orcas, and how his friends
in Holland even promised both men and arms ;
but none of these promises had been kept ;

how Dad had brought promises of support from all the Nonconformists of the West, but hardly any, save at Taunton, had come forward ; and how the army was melting away and no more recruits coming in. And then he said that he had been the means of bringing so many to the Duke that if they died their deaths would lie upon his conscience. And he spoke lovingly of Robin and of thee, Sister. And so we parted, and I saw him no more. As for what he said, I minded it not a straw. Many a croaker turns out in the long run to be brave in the fight. Doubtless he is dead ; and Robin, too. Both are dead. I take it, Sis, thou hast lost thy sweetheart. Cry a little, my dear,' he added kindly ; ' 'twill ease the pain at thy heart. 'Tis natural for a woman to cry.'

'I cannot cry, Barnaby : I wish I could. The tears rise to my eyes, but my throat is dry.'

'Try a prayer or two, Sister. 'Twas wont to comfort the heart of my mother when she was in trouble.'

‘A prayer? Brother, I have done nothing but pray since this unfortunate rebellion began. A prayer? Oh, I cannot pray! If I were to pray now it would be as if my words were echoed back from a wall of solid rock. We were praying all yesterday; we made the Sabbath into a day of prayer without ceasing; and this morning, when you opened the door, we were praising and thanking God for the mercy of the great victory bestowed upon us. And at that time the poor brave men’——

‘They were brave enough to the end,’ said Barnaby.

‘The poor brave men lying cold and dead upon the field (among them, maybe, Robin!), and the prisoners huddled together somewhere, and men hanging already upon the gibbets. We were praising God—and my father lying on the ground stricken to death, and thou a fugitive, and all of us ruined! Prayer? How could I pray from such a pit of woe?’

‘Child,’ my mother lifted her pale face,

‘in the darkest hour pray without ceasing. Even if there happen a darker hour than this, in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known—with thanksgiving, my daughter.’

Alas ! I could not obey the apostolic order. ‘Twas too much for me. So we fell into silence. When the sun had quite gone down Barnaby went forth cautiously. Presently he came back.

‘There is no one on the road,’ he said. ‘We may now go on our way. The air of Taunton is dangerous to us. It breeds swift and fatal diseases. I have now resolved what to do. I will lift my father upon the cart again and put in the pony. Four or five miles sou-west or thereabouts is Black Down, which is a No-Man’s-Land. Thither will we go and hide in the combs, where no one ever comes, except the gipsies.’

‘How shall we live, Barnaby ?’

‘That,’ he said, ‘we shall find out when we come to look about us. There is provision for two days. The nights are warm.

We shall find cover or make it with branches. There is water in the brooks and dry wood to burn. There we may, perhaps, be safe. When the country is quiet we will make our way across the hills to Bradford Orcas, where no one will molest you, and I can go off to Bristol or Lyme, or wherever there are ships to be found. When sailors are shipwrecked, they do not begin by asking what they shall do on dry land : they ask only to feel the stones beneath their feet. We must think of nothing now but of a place of safety.'

'Barnaby, are the open hills a proper place for a wounded man ?'

'Why, Child, for a choice between the hills and what else may happen if we stay here, give me the hills, even for a wounded man. But, indeed'—he whispered, so that my mother should not hear him—'he will die. Death is written on his face. I know not how long he will live. But he must die. Never did any man recover from such evil plight.'

He harnessed the pony to the cart, which

was little more than a couple of planks laid side by side, and laid father upon them, just as he had brought him from Taunton. My mother made a kind of pillow for him, with grass tied up in her kerchief, and so we hoped that he would not feel the jogging of the cart.

‘The stream,’ said Barnaby, ‘comes down from the hills. Let us follow its course upwards.’

It was a broad stream with a shallow bed, for the most part flat and pebbly, and on either side of the stream lay a strip of soft turf, broad enough for the cart to run upon. So that, as long as that lasted, we had very easy going; my mother and I walking one on each side, so as to steady the pillow and keep the poor head upon it from pain. But whether we went easy, or whether we went rough, that head made no sign of feeling aught, and lay, just as in the linney, as if dead.

I cannot tell how long we went on beside that stream. ’Twas in a wild, uncultivated

country ; the ground ascended ; the stream became narrower and swifter ; presently the friendly strip of turf failed altogether, and then we had trouble to keep the cart from upsetting. I went to the pony's head, and Barnaby, going behind the cart, lifted it over the rough places, and sometimes carried his end of it. The night was chilly ; my feet were wet with splashing in the brook, and I was growing faint with hunger, when Barnaby called a halt.

‘ We are now,’ he said, ‘ at the head of the stream. In half an hour, or thereabouts, it will be break of day. Let us rest. Mother, you must eat something. Come, Sister, ’tis late for supper, and full early for breakfast. Take some meat and bread and half a cup of cider.’

It is all I remember of that night.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CAMP IN THE COMB.



CAMPING-PLACE, when I awoke in the morning, I found to be near the head of a most beautiful comb or valley among the Black Down Hills. I knew it not at the time, but it was not far from that old Roman stronghold which we had passed

on our way to Taunton, called Castle Ratch. The hills on the Somerset side are of a gentle or gradual slope, and the valley was not deep, but yet, where we lay,

so grown over with trees as to afford a complete shelter and hiding-place, while at our feet the brook took its rise in a green quagmire and began to make its way downwards among ferns and bushes and through a wild, uncultivated country, beyond which the farms and fields began. The birds were singing, the sun was already high, and the air was warm, though there was a fresh breeze blowing. The warmth and sweetness filled my soul when I awoke, and I sat up with joy, until suddenly I remembered why we were here, and who were here with me. Then my heart sank like a lump of lead in water. I looked around. My father lay just as he had been lying all the day before, motionless, white of cheek, and as one dead, save for the slight motion of his chest and the twitching of his nostril. As I looked at him in the clear morning light, it was borne in upon me very strongly that he was indeed dead, inasmuch as his soul seemed to have fled. He saw nothing, he felt nothing. If the flies crawled over his eyelids he made no sign of disturb-

ance ; yet he breathed, and from time to time he murmured—but as one that dreameth. Beside him lay my mother sleeping, worn out by the fatigues of the night. Barnaby had spread his coat to cover her so that she should not take cold, and he had piled a little heap of dead leaves to make her a pillow. He was lying at her feet, head on arm, sleeping heavily. What should be done, I wondered, when next he woke ?

First I went down the comb a little way till the stream was deep enough, and there I bathed my feet, which were swollen and bruised by the long walk up the comb. Though it was in the midst of so much misery there was a pleasure of dabbling my feet in the cool water and afterwards of walking about barefoot in the grass. I disturbed an adder which was sleeping on a flat stone in the sun, and it lifted its venomous head and hissed, but did not spring upon me. Then I washed my face and hands and made my hair as smooth as without a comb it was possible. When I had done this I remembered that

perhaps my father might be thirsty or at least able to drink, though he seemed no more to feel hunger or thirst. So I filled the tin pannikin—it was Barnaby's—with water and tried to pour a little into his mouth. He seemed to swallow it, and I gave him a little more until he would swallow no more. Observe that he took no other nourishment than a little water, wine, or milk, or a few drops of broth until the end. So I covered his face with a handkerchief to keep off the flies, and left him. Then I looked into the basket. All that there was in it would not be more than enough for Barnaby's breakfast, unless his appetite should fail him by reason of fear ; though, in truth, he had no fear of being captured, or of anything else. There was in it a piece of bacon, a large loaf of bread, a lump of cheese, a bottle of cider ; nothing more. When these provisions were gone, what next ? Could we venture into the nearest village and buy food, or to the first farm-house ? Then we might fall straight into the jaws of the enemy, who were pro-

bably running over the whole country in search of the fugitives. Could we buy without money? Could we beg without arousing suspicions? If the people were well-inclined to the Protestant Cause we might trust them. But how could we tell that? So in my mind I turned over everything except the one thing which might have proved our salvation, and that you shall hear directly. Also, which was a very strange thing, I quite forgot that I had upon me, tied by a string round my waist and well concealed, Barnaby's bag of gold—two hundred and fifty pieces. Thus there was money enough and to spare. I discovered, next, that our pony had run away in the night. The cart was there, but no pony to drag it. Well, it was not much; but it seemed an additional burden to bear. I ventured a little way up the valley, following a sheep-track which mounted higher and higher. I saw no sign anywhere of man's presence; that, I take it, is marked in woods by circles of burnt cinders, by trees felled, by bundles of broom or fern tied up, or by shepherds'

huts. Here there was nothing at all ; you would have said that the place had never been visited by man. Presently I came to a place where the woods ceased, the last of the trees being much stunted and blown over from the west ; and then the top of the hill began, not a sharp pico or point, but a great open plain, flat, or swelling out here and there with many of the little hillocks which people say are ancient tombs. And no trees at all, but only bare turf, so that one could see a great way off. But there was no sign of man anywhere : no smoke in the comb at my feet ; no shepherd on the hill. At this juncture of our fortunes any stranger might be an enemy ; therefore I returned, but so far well pleased.

Barnaby was now awake, and was inspecting the basket of provisions.

‘ Sister,’ he said, ‘ we must go upon half rations for breakfast ; but I hope, unless my skill fails, to bring you something better for supper. The bread you shall have, and mother. The bacon may keep till to-morrow. The cider you had better keep against such

times as you feel worn out and want a cordial, though a glass of Nantz were better, if Nantz grew in the woods.' He looked around as if to see whether a miracle would not provide him with a flask of strong drink, but, seeing none, shook his head.

'As for me,' he went on, 'I am a sailor, and I understand how to forage. Therefore, yesterday, foreseeing that the provisions might give out, I dropped the shank of the ham into my pocket. Now you shall see.'

He produced this delicate morsel, and, sitting down, began to gnaw and to bite into the bone with his strong teeth, exactly like a dog. This he continued, with every sign of satisfaction, for a quarter of an hour or so, when he desisted, and replaced the bone in his pocket.

'We throw away the bones,' he said. 'The dogs gnaw them and devour them. Think you that it is for their amusement? Not so; but for the juices and the nourishment that are in and around the bone; for the marrow and for the meat that still will stick in odd corners.' He went down to the

stream with the pannikin and drank a cup or two of water to finish what they call a horse's meal—namely, the food first and the water afterwards.

‘And now,’ he added, ‘I have breakfasted. It is true that I am still hungry, but I have eaten enough to carry me on for a while. Many a poor lad cast away on a desert shore would find the shank of a ham a meal fit for a king ; aye, and a meal or two after that. I shall make a dinner presently off this bone ; and I shall still keep it against a time when there may be no provision left.’

Then he looked about him, shading his eyes with his hand. ‘Let us consider,’ he said. ‘The troopers, I take it, are riding along the roads. Whether they will ride over these hills, I know not ; but I think they will not, because their horses cannot well get up these combs. Certainly, if they do, it will not be by the way we came. We are here, therefore, hidden away snug. Why should we budge ? Nowhere is there a more deserted part of the country than Black Down, on

whose side we are. And I do not think, further, that we should find anywhere a safer place to hide ourselves in than this comb, where, I dare to say, no one comes, unless it be the gipsies or the broom-squires, all the year round. And now they are all laden with the spoil of the army—for, after a battle, this gentry swoop down upon the field like the great birds which I have seen abroad upon the carcasses of drowned beasts, and plunder the dead. Next they must go into town in order to sell their booty ; then they will be fain to drink about till all is spent ; so they will leave us undisturbed. Therefore, we will stay here, Sister. First, I will go try the old tricks by which I did often in the old time improve the fare at home. Next, I will devise some way of making a more comfortable resting-place. Thank the Lord for fine weather, so far.'

He was gone a couple of hours. During that time my mother awoke. Her mind was broken by the suddenness of this trouble, and she cared no more to speak, sitting still by the

side of her husband, and watching for any change in him. But I persuaded her to take a little bread and a cup of cider.

When Barnaby came back, he brought with him a blackbird, a thrush, and two wood-pigeons. He had not forgotten the tricks of his boyhood, when he would often bring home a rabbit, a hare, or a basket of trout. So that my chief terror, that we might be forced to abandon our hiding-place through sheer hunger, was removed. But Barnaby was full of all kinds of devices.

He then set to work with his great knife, cutting down a quantity of green branches, which he laid out side by side, with their leaves on, and then bound them together, cleverly interlacing the smaller shoots and branches with each other, so that he made a long kind of hurdle, about six feet high. This, which by reason of the leaves was almost impervious to the wind, he disposed round the trunks of three young trees growing near each other. Thus he made a small three-cornered inclosure. Again, he cut other

and thicker branches, and laid them over and across this hurdle, and cut turf which he placed upon the branches, so that here was now a hut with a roof and walls complete. Said I not that Barnaby was full of devices ?

‘There,’ he said, when all was ready, ‘is a house for you. It will have to rain hard and long before the water begins to drop through the branches which make the roof, and the slabs of turf. Well, ’tis a shelter. Not so comfortable as the old cottage, perhaps, but nearly as commodious. If it is not a palace, it will serve us to keep off the sun by day and the dew by night.’

Next he gathered a great quantity of dry fern, dead leaves, and heather, and these he disposed within the hut, so that they made a thick and warm carpet or covering. Nay, at night they even formed a covering for the feet and prevented one from feeling cold. When all was done, he lifted my father gently and laid him with great tenderness upon this carpet within the rude shelter.

‘This shall be a warmer night for thee

than the last, Dad,' he said. 'There shall be no jolting of thy poor bones. What, mother? We can live here till the cold weather comes. The wind will perhaps blow a bit through the leaves to-night, but not much, and to-morrow I will see to that. Be easy in your mind about the provisions'—Alas! my poor mother was thinking of anything in the world except the provisions—'There are rabbits and birds in plenty; we can catch them and eat them; bread we must do without when what we have is gone, and as for strong drink and tobacco'—he sighed heavily—'they will come again when better times are served out.'

In these labours I helped as much as I was able, and particularly in twisting the branches together. And thus the whole day passed, not tediously, and without any alarms, the labour being cheered by the hopefulness of Barnaby's honest face. No one, to look at that face, could believe that he was flying for his life, and would be hanged if he was caught. After sunset we lit a fire, but a

small one only, and well hidden by the woods, so that its light might not be seen from below. Then Barnaby dextrously plucked and trussed the birds and roasted them in the embers, so that had my heart been at rest I should have had a most delicious supper. And I confess that I did begin to pluck up a little courage, and to hope that we might yet escape, and that Robin might be living. After supper my mother prayed, and I could join with more of resignation and something of faith. Alas ! in times of trial how easily doth the Christian fall from faith ! The day before, prayer seemed to me a mockery ; it was as if all prayer were addressed to a deaf God, or to One who will not hear ; for our prayers had all been for safety and victory, and we were suddenly answered with disaster and defeat.

After supper, Barnaby sat beside the embers and began to talk in a low voice.

‘ ’Twill be a sorrowful barley-mow song this year,’ he said ; ‘ a dozen brave lads from Bradford alone will be dead.’

‘Not all dead, Barnaby! Oh! not all!’

‘I know not. Some are prisoners, some are dead, some are running away.’ Then he began to sing in a low voice,

‘Here ’s a health to the barley-mow—

I remember, Sister, when I would run a mile to hear that song, though my father flogged me for it in the morning. ’Tis the best song ever written.’ He went on singing in a kind of whisper—

‘We ’ll drink it out of the nipperkin, boys—

Robin—poor Robin! he is dead!—was a famous hand at singing it; but Humphrey found the words too rustical. Humphrey—who is now dead, too!—was ever for fine words, like Mr. Boscorel.

‘We’ll drink it out of the jolly brown bowl—

‘I think I see him now—poor Robin! Well; he is no more. He used to laugh in all our faces while he sang it :—

We ’ll drink it out o’ the river, my boys.

Here s a health to the barley-mow!

The river, the well, the pipe, the hogshead, the half-Hogshead, the anker, the half-anker, the gallon, the Pottle, the quart, the pint, the half-pint, the quarter-Pint, the nipperkin, the jolly brown bowl, my boys,
Here 's a health to the barley-mow !'

He trolled out the song in a melodious whisper. Oh ! Barnaby, how didst thou love good companionship with singing and drinking !

' 'Twill be lonely for thee, Sister, at Bradford when thou dost return ; Sir Christopher, I take it, will not long hold up his head, and Madam will pine away for the loss of Robin, and mother looks as if she would follow after, so white and wan is she. If she would speak or complain or cry it would comfort her, poor soul ! 'Twas a sad day for her when she married the poor old Dad. Poverty and hard work, and now a cruel end—poor mother !'

' Barnaby, you tear my heart !'

' Nay, Child, 'tis better to talk than to keep silence. Better have your heart torn than be choked with your pain. Thou art like unto a man who hath a wounded leg, and if he doth not consent to have it cut off, though the an-

guish be sharp, he will presently bleed to death. Say to thyself, therefore, plain and clear, "Robin is dead ; I have lost my sweetheart."'

'No—no—Barnaby—I cannot say those cruel words ! Oh ! I cannot say them ; I cannot feel that Robin is truly dead !'

'Put the case that he is living. Then he is either a prisoner or he is in hiding. If a prisoner, he is as good as dead ; because the Duke's officers and the gentlemen who joined him, they will never forgive—that is quite certain. If I were a prisoner I should feel my neck already tightened. If he is not a prisoner, where is he to hide ?—whither betake himself ? I can get sailors' duds and go abroad before the mast ; and ten to one nobody will find me out, because, d'ye see, I can talk the sailors' language, and I know their manners and customs. But Robin—what is Robin to do, if he is alive ? And this, I say, is doubtful. Best say to thyself, "I have lost my sweetheart." So wilt thou all the sooner recover thy cheerfulness.'

'Barnaby, you know not what you say !

Alas! if my Robin is dead—if my boy is truly dead—then I ask for nothing more than swift death—speedy death—to join him and be with him!’

‘If he escape he will make for Bradford Orcas and hide in the Corton woods. That is quite certain. They always make for home. I would that we were in that friendly place, so that you could go live in the cottage and bring provisions, with tobacco and drink, to us unsuspected and unseen. When we have rested here a while we will push across the hills and try to get there by night; but it is a weary way to drag that wounded man. However’—he broke off and said earnestly—‘make up thy mind, Child, to the worst. ’Tis as if a shipwrecked man should hope that enough of the ship would float to carry him home withal. Make up thy mind. We are all ruined and lost—all—all—all. Thy father is dying—thy lover is dead—thou art thyself in great danger by reason of that affair at Taunton. Everything being gone, turn round therefore and make thyself as comfort-

able as possible. What will happen we know not. Therefore count every day of safety for gain, and every meal for a respite.'

He was silent for a while, leaving me to think over what he had said. Here, indeed, was a philosopher. Things being all lost, and our affairs in a desperate condition, we were to turn round and make ourselves as comfortable as we could ! This, I suppose, is what sailors are wont to do ; certainly they are a folk more exposed to misfortune than others, and therefore, perhaps, more ready to make the best of whatever happens.

'Barnaby,' I said presently, 'how can I turn round and make myself comfortable ?'

'The evening is still,' he said, without replying. 'See, there is a bat, and there another. If it were not for the trouble in there'—he pointed to the hut—'I should be easy in my mind and contented. I could willingly live here a twelvemonth. Why, compared with the lot of the poor devils who must now be in prison, what is ours ? They get the foul and stinking Clink, with bad food, in the

midst of wounded men whose hurts are putrefying, with jail fever, and with the whipping-post or the gallows to come. We breathe sweet air, we find sufficient food—to-morrow, if I know any of the signs, thou shalt taste a roasted hedgehog, dish fit for a king! I found at the bottom of the comb a pot left by some gipsies: thou shalt have boiled sorrel and mushrooms to thy supper. If we stay here long enough there will be nuts and blackberries and whortleberries. Pity, a thousand pities there is not a drop of drink! I dream of punch and hipsy. Think upon what remains, even if thou canst not bear to think of what is lost. Hast ever seen a tall ship founder in the waves? They close over her as she sinks, and, in an instant, it is as if that tall ship with all her crew had never been in existence at all. The army of Monmouth is scattered and ruined. Well; it is, with us, amidst these woods, just as if there had been no army. It has been a dream perhaps. Who can tell? Sometimes all the past seems to have been a dream. It is all a dream—

past and future. There is no past and there is no future ; all is a dream. But the present we have. Let us be content therewith.'

He spoke slowly and with measured accents as one enchanted. Sometimes Barnaby was but a rough and rude sailor. At other times, as these, he betrayed signs of his early education and spoke as one who thought.

'It is ten years and more since last I breathed the air of the hills. I knew not that I loved so much the woods and valleys and the streams. Some day, if I survive this adventure, I will build me a hut and live here alone in the woods. Why, if I were alone I should have an easy heart. If I were driven out of one place I could find another. I am in no hurry to get down among men and towns. Let us all stay here and be happy. But there is Dad—who lives not, yet is not dead. Sister, be thankful for thy safety in the woods, and think not too much upon the dead.'

We lived in this manner, the weather being for the most part fine and warm, but with showers now and then, for a fortnight or there-

abouts, no one coming up the comb and there being still no sign of man's presence in the hills. Our daily fare consisted of the wild birds snared by Barnaby, such creatures as rabbits, hedgehogs, and the like, which he caught by ingenious ways, and trout from the brook, which he caught with a twisted pin or by tickling them with his hand. There were also mushrooms and edible leaves, such as the nettle, wild sorrel, and the like of which he knew. These we boiled and ate. He also plucked the half-ripe blackberries and boiled them to make a sour drink, and one which, like the cider loved by our people, would grip his throat, because he could not endure plain cold water. And he made out of the bones of the birds a kind of thin broth for my father, of which he daily swallowed a teaspoonful or so. So that we fared well, if not sumptuously. The bread, to be sure, which Barnaby left for mother and me, was coming to the last crust, and I know not how we should have got more without venturing into the nearest village.

Now, as I talked every night with my brother, I found out what a brave and simple soul it was—always cheerful and hopeful, talking always as if we were the most fortunate people in the world, instead of the most miserable, and yet by keeping the truth before me, preventing me from getting into another Fool's Paradise as to our safety and Robin's escape, such as that into which I had fallen after the army marched out of Taunton. I understand, now, that he was always thinking how to smooth and soften things for us, so that we might not go distracted with anxiety and grief ; finding work for me, talking about other things—in short, the most thoughtful and affectionate brother in all the world. As for my mother, he could do nothing to move her. She still sat beside her wounded husband, watching all day long for any sign of consciousness or change.

Seeing that Barnaby was so good and gentle a creature, I could not understand how it was that in the old days he used to get a flogging most days for some offence or other, so that I had grown up to believe him a very

wicked boy indeed. I put this question to him one night.

He put it aside for a while, replying in his own fashion.

‘I remember Dad,’ he said, ‘before thou canst, Sister. He was always thin and tall, and he always stooped as he walked. But his hair, which now is white, was brown, and fell in curls which he could not straighten. He was always mighty grave ; no one, I am sure, ever saw him laugh ; I have never seen him so much as smile, except sometimes when he dandled thee upon his knee, and thou wouldst amuse him with innocent prattle. All his life he hath spent in finding out the way to heaven. He did find the way--I suppose he hath truly discovered it—and a mighty thorny and difficult way it is, so that I know not how any can succeed in reaching port by such navigation. The devil of it is that he believes there is no other way ; and he seemed never so happy as when he had found another trap or pitfall to catch the unwary, and send them straight to hell.

‘For my part,’ Barnaby went on slowly, ‘I could never love such a life. Let others, if they will, find out rough and craggy ways that lead to heaven. For my part, I am content to jog along the plain and smooth high road with the rest of mankind, though it brings us in the end to a lower place, inhabited by the baser sort. Well, I dare say I shall find mates there, and we will certainly make ourselves as comfortable as the place allows. Let my father, therefore, find out what awaits him in the other world ; let me take what comes in this. Some of it is sweet and some is bitter ; some of it makes us laugh and sing and dance ; and some makes us curse and swear and bellow out, as when one is lashed to the hatches, and the cat falls on his naked back. Sometimes, Sister, I think the naked negroes of the Guiney Coast the happiest people in the world. Do they trouble their heads about the way to heaven ? Not they. What comes they take, and they ask no more. Has it made Dad the happier to find out how few are those who will sit beside him when

he hath his harp and crown ? Not so. He would have been happier if he had been a jolly ploughboy whistling to his team, or a jolly sailor singing over his pannikin of drink of a Saturday night. He tried to make me follow in his footsteps ; he flogged me daily in the hope of making me take, like himself, to the trade of proving out of the Holy Bible that most people are surely damned. The more he flogged, the less I yearned after that trade ; till at last I resolved that, come what would, I would never thump a pulpit like him in conventicle or church. Then, if you will believe me, Sister, I grew tired of flogging, which, when it comes every day, wearies a boy at fourteen or fifteen more than you would think. Now, one day, while I was dancing to the pipe and tabor with some of the village girls, as bad luck would have it, Dad came by. “ Child of Satan ! ” he roared seizing me by the ear, which I verily thought he would have pulled off. Then to the girls, “ Your laughter shall be turned into mourning,” and so lugged me home and sent me supperless to bed,

with the promise of such a flogging in the morning as should make all previous floggings seem mere fleabites or joyous ticklings in comparison. This decided me. So in the dead of night I crept softly down the stairs, cut myself a great hunch of bread and cheese, and ran away and went to sea.'

'Barnaby, was it well done—to run away?'

'Well, Sister, 'tis done; and if it was ill done, 'tis by this time, no doubt, forgotten. Now, remember, I blame not my father. Before all things he would save my soul alive. That was why he flogged me. He knew but one way, and along that way he would drive me. So he flogged me the harder. I blame him not. Yet had I remained he would doubtless be flogging me still. Now, remember again, that ever since I understood anything I have always been enraged to think upon the monstrous oppression which silenced him and brought us all to poverty, and made my mother, a gentlewoman born, work her fingers to the bone, and caused me to choose between being a beggarly scholar, driven to teach brats and

endure flouts and poverty, or to put on an apron and learn a trade. Wherefore when I found that Monmouth was going to hoist his flag, I came with him in order to strike a blow, and I hoped a good blow, too, at the oppressors.'

'You have struck that blow, Barnaby, and where are we?'

He laughed.

'We are in hiding. Some of the King's troopers did I make to bite the dust. They may hang me for it, if they will. They will not bring those troopers back to life. Well—— Sister, I am sleepy. Good-night!'

We might have continued this kind of life I know not how much longer. Certainly, till the cold nights came. The weather continued fine and warm; the hut kept off dews at night; we lay warm among the heather and the ferns; Barnaby found a sufficiency of food; my father grew no worse, to outward seeming; and we seemed in safety.

Then an ill chance and my own foolishness marred all.

One day, in the afternoon, Barnaby being

away looking after his snares and gins, I heard, lower down the comb, voices as of boys talking. This affrighted me terribly. The voices seemed to be drawing nearer. Now if the children came up as high as our encampment, they could not fail to see the signs of habitation. There was the hut among the trees and the iron pot standing among the grey embers of last night's fire. The cart stood on one side. We could not possibly remain hidden. If they should come up so far and find us, they would certainly carry the report of us down to the village.

I considered, therefore, what to do, and then ran quickly down the comb, keeping among the trees so as not to be seen.

After a little I discovered, a little way off, a couple of boys about nine years of age. They were common village boys, rosy faced and wholesome; they carried a basket, and they were slowly making their way up the stream, stopping now to throw a stone at a squirrel, and now to dam the running water, and now to find a nut or filbert ripe enough to

be eaten. By the basket which they carried I knew that they were come in search of whortleberries, for which purpose they would have to get quite to the end of the comb and the top of the hill.

Therefore, I stepped out of the wood and asked them whence they came and whither they were going.

They told me in plain Somersetshire (the language which I love, and would willingly have written this book in it, but for the unfortunate people who cannot understand it) that they were sent by their parents to get whortleberries and that they came from the little village of Corfe, two miles down the valley. This was all they had to say, and they stared at me as shyly as if they had never before encountered a stranger. I clearly perceive now that I ought to have engaged them in conversation and drawn them gently down the valley in the direction of their village until we reached the first appearance of a road, when I could have bidden them farewell or sent them up the hill by another comb. But I was so

anxious that they should not come up any higher than I committed a great mistake, and warned them against going on.

‘Boys,’ I said, ‘beware! If you go higher up the comb you will certainly meet wild men, who always rob and beat boys;’ here they trembled, though they had not a penny in the world. ‘Ay, boys! and sometimes have been known to murder them. Turn back—turn back—and come no farther.’

The boys were very much frightened, partly at the apparition of a stranger where they expected to find no one, and partly at the news of wild and murderous men in a place where they had never met with anyone at all, unless it might have been a gipsy camp. After gazing at me stupidly for a little while they turned and ran away, as fast as their legs could carry them, down the comb.

I watched them running, and when they were out of sight I went back again, still disquieted, because they might return.

When I told Barnaby in the evening, he, too, was uneasy. For, he said, the boys

would spread abroad the report that there were people in the valley. What people could there be but fugitives ?

‘Sister,’ he said, ‘to-morrow morning must we change our quarters. On the other side of the hills looking south, or to the east in Neroche Forest, we may make another camp, and be still more secluded. For to-night I think we are in safety.’

What happened was exactly as Barnaby thought. For the lads ran home and told everybody that up in the comb there were wild men who robbed and murdered people : that a lady had come out of the wood and warned them to go no farther, lest they should be robbed and murdered. They were certain it was a lady, and not a country-woman ; nor was it a witch ; nor a fairy or elf, of whom there are many on Black Down. No ; it was a lady.

This strange circumstance set the villagers a-talking ; they talked about it at the inn, whither they nightly repaired.

In ordinary times they might have talked about it to their heart’s content, and no harm

done ; but in these times talk was dangerous. In every little village there are one or two whose wits are sharper than the rest, and, therefore, they do instigate whatever mischief is done in that village. At Corfe, the cobbler it was who did the mischief. For he sat thinking while the others talked, and he presently began to understand that there was more in this than his fellows imagined. He knew the hills ; there were no wild men upon them who would rob and murder two simple village boys. Gipsies there were, and broom-squires sometimes, and hedge-tearers ; but murderers of boys—none. And who was this gentlewoman ? Then he guessed the whole truth : there were people lying hidden in the comb ; if people hidden, they were Monmouth's rebels. A reward would be given for their capture. Fired with this thought he grasped his cudgel and walked off to the village of Orchard Portman, where, as he had heard, there was lying a company of Grenadiers sent out to scour the country. He laid his information, and received the promise of reward.

He got that reward, in short ; but nothing prospered with him afterwards. His neighbours, who were all for Monmouth, learned what he had done, and shunned him. He grew moody ; he fell into poverty, who had been a thriving tradesman ; and he died in a ditch. The judgments of the Lord are sometimes swift and sometimes slow, yet they are always sure. Who can forget the dreadful end of Tom Boilman, as he was called, the only wretch who could be found to cut up the limbs of the hanged men and dip them in the cauldrons of pitch ? For he was struck dead by lightning—an awful instance of the wrath of God !

Early next morning, about five of the clock, I sat before the hut in the shade. Barnaby was up and had gone to look at his snares. Suddenly I heard steps below, and the sound as of weapons clashing against each other. Then a man came into sight—a fellow he was with a leathern apron, who stood gazing about him. There was no time for me to hide, because he immediately saw me and

shouted to them behind to come on quickly. Then a dozen soldiers, all armed, ran out of the wood and made for the hut.

‘Gentlemen,’ I cried, running to meet them, ‘whom seek you?’

‘Who are you?’ asked one, who seemed to be a Sergeant over them. ‘Why are you in hiding?’

Then a thought struck me. I know not if I was wise or foolish.

‘Sir,’ I replied, ‘my father, it is true, was with the Duke of Monmouth. But he was wounded, and now lies dead in this hut. You will suffer us to bury our dead in peace.’

‘Dead is he? That will we soon see.’

So saying, he entered the hut and looked at the prostrate form. He lifted one hand and let it drop. It fell like the hand of one who is recently dead. He bent over the body and laid his hand upon the forehead. It was cold as death. The lips were pale as wax, and the cheeks were white. He opened an eye : there was no expression or light in it.

‘Humph!’ he said; ‘he seems dead. How did he come here?’

‘My mother and I drove him here for safety in yonder cart. The pony hath run away.’

‘That may be so; that may be so. He is dressed in a cassock: what is his name?’

‘He was Dr. Comfort Eykin, an ejected minister and preacher in the Duke’s army.’

‘A prize, if he had been alive!’ Then a sudden suspicion seized him. He had in his hand a drawn sword. He pointed it at the breast of the dead man. ‘If he be truly dead,’ he said, ‘another wound will do him no harm. Wherefore’—he made as if he would drive the sword through my father’s breast, and my mother shrieked and threw herself across the body.

‘So!’ he said, with a horrid grin, ‘I find that he is not dead, but only wounded. My lads, here is one of Monmouth’s preachers; but he is sore wounded.’

‘Oh!’ I cried, ‘for the love of God suffer him to die in peace!’

‘Ay, ay, he shall die in peace, I promise you so much. Meanwhile, Madam, we will take better care of him in Ilminster Jail than you can do here. The air is raw upon these hills.’ The fellow had a glib tongue and a mocking manner. ‘You have none of the comforts which a wounded man requires. They are all to be found in Ilminster prison, whither we shall carry him. There will he have nothing to think about, with everything found for him. Madam, your father will be well bestowed with us.’

At that moment I heard the footsteps of Barnaby crunching among the brushwood.

‘Fly ! Barnaby, fly !’ I shrieked. ‘The enemy is upon us !’

He did not fly. He came running. He rushed upon the soldiers, and hurled this man one way and that man another, swinging his long arms like a pair of cudgels. Had he had a cudgel I believe he would have sent them all flying. But he had nothing except his arms and his fists ; and in a minute or two the soldiers had surrounded him, each with a

bayonet pointed, and such a look in every man's eye as meant murder had Barnaby moved.

‘Surrender!’ said the Sergeant.

Barnaby looked around leisurely.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘I suppose I must. As for my name, it is Barnaby Eykin; and, for my rank, I was Captain in the Green Regiment of the Duke’s valiant army.’

‘Stop!’ said the Sergeant, drawing a paper from his pocket. “‘Captain Eykin,’” he began to read, “‘has been a sailor. Rolls in his walk; height, about five foot five; very broad in the shoulders; long in the arms; of great strength.”’

‘That is so,’ said Barnaby, complacently.

“‘Legs short and figure stumpy.”’

‘What?’ cried Barnaby, ‘stumpy?’

“‘Legs short and figure stumpy,”’ repeated the Sergeant reading.

‘That is so set down, is it? Then,’ said Barnaby, looking down at his limbs, ‘’twas a pity that, with such legs as these, I did not deny my name. Call these short, brother?’

CHAPTER XXV.

ILMINSTER CLINK.



CAN I tell—oh ! how
can I sit down to tell
in cold blood the story
of all that followed ?

Some parts of it for very
pity I must pass over.

All that has been told or
written of the Bloody Assize
is most true, and yet not half
that happened can be told. There
are things, I mean, which the
historian cannot, for the sake of pity,
decency, and consideration for living
people, relate, even if he hath seen them.

You who read the printed page may learn how in
one place so many were hanged ; in another place so

many ; how some were hung in gennaces, so that at every cross-road there was a frightful gibbet with a dead man on it ; how some died of small-pox in the crowded prisons, and some of fever ; and how Judge Jeffreys rode from town to town, followed by gangs of miserable prisoners driven after him to stand their trial in towns where they would be known ; how the wretched sufferers were drawn and quartered, and their limbs seethed in pitch, and stuck up over the whole country ; how the women and boys of tender years were flogged through market-towns—you, I say, who read these things on the cold page presently (even if you be a stickler for the Right Divine, and hold rebellion as a mortal sin) feel your blood to boil with righteous wrath. The hand of the Lord was afterwards heavy upon those who ordered these things ; nay, at the very time (this is a most remarkable Judgment, and one little known) when this inhuman Judge was thundering at his victims—so that some went mad and even dropped down dead with fear—he was himself, as

Humphrey hath assured me, suffering the most horrible pain from a dire disease ; so that the terrors of his voice and of his fiery eyes were partly due to the agony of his disease, and he was enduring all through that Assize, in his own body, pangs greater than any that he ordered ! As for his miserable end, and the fate that overtook his master, that we know ; and candid souls cannot but confess that here were truly Judgments of God, visible for all to see and acknowledge. But no pen can truly depict what the eye saw and the ear heard during that terrible time. And, think you, if it was a terrible and a wretched time for those who had no relations among the rebels, and only looked on and saw these bloody executions and heard the lamentations of the poor women who lost their lovers or their husbands, what must it have been for me, and those like me, whose friends and all whom they loved—yea, all, all!—were overwhelmed in one common ruin, and expected nothing but death?

Our own misery I cannot truly set forth.

Sometimes the memory of it comes back to me, and it is as if long afterwards one should feel again the sharpness of the surgeon's knife. Oh! since I must write down what happened, let me be brief. And you who read it, if you find the words cold where you would have looked for fire; if you find no tears where there should have been weeping and wailing, remember that in the mere writing have been shed again (but these you cannot see) the tears which belonged to that time, and in the writing have been renewed (but these you cannot hear) the sobbings and wailings and terrors of that dreadful autumn.

The soldiers belonged to a company of Grenadiers of Trelawny's Regiment, stationed at Ilminster, whither they carried the prisoners. First they handcuffed Barnaby, but, on his giving his parole not to escape, they let him go free; and he proved useful in the handling of the cart on which my unhappy father lay. And, though the soldiers' talk was ribald, their jests unseemly, and their cursing and swearing seemed verily to invite the wrath of God, yet

they proved honest fellows in the main. They offered no rudeness to us, nor did they object to our going with the prisoners; nay, they even gave us bread and meat and cider from their own provisions when they halted for dinner at noon. Barnaby walked sometimes with the soldiers, and sometimes with us; with them he talked freely, and as if he were their comrade and not their prisoner: with us he put in a word of encouragement or consolation, such as ‘Mother, we shall find a way out of this coil yet;’ or ‘Sister, we shall cheat Tom Hangman. Look not so gloomy upon it;’ or, again, he reminded us that many a shipwrecked sailor gets safe ashore, and that where there are so many they cannot hang all. ‘Would the King,’ he asked, ‘hang up the whole county of Somerset?’ But he had already told me too much. In his heart I knew he had small hope of escape; yet he preserved his cheerfulness, and walked towards his prison (to outward seeming) as insensible of fear, and with as unconcerned a countenance as if he were going to a banquet or a wedding. This cheerfulness

of his was due to a happy confidence in the ordering of things rather than to insensibility. A sailor sees men die in many ways, yet himself remains alive. This gives him something of the disposition of the Oriental, who accepts his fate with outward unconcern, whatever it may be. Perhaps (I know not) there may have been in his mind that religious Assurance of which he had told me. Did Barnaby at this period, when death was very near unto him, really believe that there was one religion for landsmen and another for sailors—one way to heaven for ministers, another for seamen? Indeed, I cannot tell; yet how otherwise account for his courage and cheerfulness at all times—even in the very presence of death?

‘Brother,’ he asked the Sergeant, ‘we have been lying hid for a fortnight, and have heard no news. Tell me, how go the hangings?’

‘Why, Captain,’ the fellow replied with a grin, ‘in this respect there is little for the rebels to complain of. They ought to be satisfied, so far, with the attentions paid to them. Lord Feversham hanged twenty odd

to begin with. Captain Adlan and three others are trussed up in chains for their greater honour ; and, in order to put the rest in good heart, one of them ran a race with a horse, being promised his life if he should win. When he had beaten the horse, his Lordship, who was ever a merry man, ordered him to be hanged just to laugh at him. And hanged he was.'

'Ay,' said Barnaby, 'thus do the Indians in America torture their prisoners first and kill them afterwards.'

'There are two hundred prisoners lying in Weston Zoyland church,' the Sergeant went on ; 'they would have been hanged, too, but the Bishop interfered. Now they are waiting to be tried. Lord ! what signifies trial, except to give them longer rope?'

'Ay, ay ; and how go things in Bridgwater and Taunton ?'

'From Weston to Bridgwater there is a line of gibbets already ; in Taunton, twenty, I believe, have swung—twenty, at least. The drums beat, the fifes played, and the trumpets sounded, and Colonel Kirke drank to the

health of every man (such was his condescension!) before he was turned off. 'Twould have done your heart good, Captain, only to see the brave show.'

'Ay, ay,' said Barnaby, unmoved; 'very like, very like. Perhaps I shall have the opportunity of playing first part in another brave show if all goes well. Hath the Duke escaped?'

'We heard yesterday that he is taken somewhere near the New Forest. So that he will before long lay his lovely head upon the block. Captain, your friends have brought their pigs to a pretty market.'

'They have, Brother; they have,' replied Barnaby, still with unmoved countenance. 'Yet many a man hath recovered from worse straits than these.'

I listened with sinking heart. Much I longed to ask if the Sergeant knew aught of Robin; but I refrained, lest merely to name him might put the soldiers on the look-out for him, should he, happily, be in hiding.

Next the Sergeant told us (which terrified

me greatly) that there was no part of the country where they were not scouring for fugitives ; that they were greatly assisted by the clergy, who, he said, were red-hot for King James ; that the men were found hiding, as we had hidden, in linneys, in hedges, in barns, in woods ; that they were captured by treachery—by information laid, and even, most cruel thing of all, by watching and following the men's sweethearts who were found taking food to them. He said also that, at the present rate, they would have to enlarge their prisons to admit ten times their number, for they were haling into them not only the men who had followed Monmouth, but also those who had helped him with money, arms, or men. The Sergeant was a brutal fellow, yet there was about him something of good nature and even of compassion for the men he had captured. But he seemed to take delight in speaking of the sufferings of the unfortunate prisoners. The soldiers, he told us, were greatly enraged towards the rebels—not, I suppose, on account of their

rebellion, because three years later they themselves showed how skin-deep was their loyalty, but because the rustics, whom they thought contemptible, had surprised and nearly beaten them. And this roused in them the spirit of revenge.

‘Captain,’ said the Sergeant, ‘’tis pity that so lusty a gentleman as thou shouldst die. Hast thou no friends at Court? No? Nor any who would speak for thee? ’Tis pity. Yet a man can die but once. With such a thick neck as thine, bespeak, if so much grace be accorded thee, a long rope and a high gallows. Else, when it comes to the quartering’—he stopped and shook his head—‘but there—I wish you well out of it, Captain.’

In the evening, just before sunset, we arrived at Ilminster, after a sad and weary march of ten miles, at least; but we could not leave the prisoners until we knew how and where they were bestowed; and during all this time my mother, who commonly walked not abroad from one Sabbath to the next, was possessed with such a spirit that she

seemed to feel no weariness. When we rode all night in order to join the Duke she complained not ; when we rode painfully across the hills to Taunton she murmured not ; nor when we carried our wounded man up the rough and steep comb ; no, nor on this day, when she walked beside her husband's head, careful lest the motion of the cart should cause him pain. But he felt nothing, poor soul ! He would feel nothing any more.

Ilminster is a goodly town, rich and prosperous with its spinners and weavers. This evening, however, there was no one in the streets except the troopers, who swaggered up and down or sat drinking at the tavern door. There is a broad open place before the market, which stands upon great stone pillars. Outside the market is the Clink, whither the soldiers were taking their prisoners. The troopers paid not the least heed to our mournful little procession—a wounded man ; a prisoner in scarlet and lace, but the cloth tattered and stained and the lace torn. They were only two more men on their way to

death. What doth a soldier care for the sight of a man about to die?

‘Mother,’ said Barnaby, when we drew near the prison gates, ‘come not within. I will do all that I can for him. Go now and find a decent lodging, and, Sister, hark ye, the lads in our army were rough, but they were as lambs compared with these swaggering troopers. Keep snug, therefore, and venture not far abroad.’

I whispered in his ear that I had his bag of money safe, so that he could have whatever he wanted if that could be bought. Then the prison gates were closed, and we stood without.

It would have been hard indeed if the wife and daughter of Dr. Comfort Eykin could not find a lodging among godly people, of whom there are always many in every town of Somerset. We presently obtained a room in the house of one Martha Prior, widow of the learned and pious Joshua Prior, whilom preacher and ejected minister. Her case was as hard as our own. This poor woman had

two sons only, and both had gone to join the Duke ; one already risen to be a Master Sergeant-maker, and one a Draper, of the town. Of her sons she could hear no news at all : whether they were alive or dead. If they were already dead, or if they should be hanged, she would have no means of support, and so must starve or eat the bread of charity. (I learned afterwards that she never did hear anything of them, so that it is certain that they must have been killed on the battle-field or cut down by the dragoons in trying to escape. But the poor soul survived not long their loss.)

The church of Ilminster stands upon a rising ground ; on the north of the church is the grammar school, and on the other three sides are houses of the better sort, of which Mrs. Prior had one. The place, which surrounds the churchyard, and hath no inn or ale-house in it, is quiet and retired. The soldiers came not thither, except once or twice, with orders to search the houses (and with a private resolution to drink everything

that they might lay their hands upon), so that, for two poor women in our miserable circumstances, we could not have a more quiet lodging.

Despite our troubles, I slept so well that night that it was past seven in the morning when I awoke. The needs of the body do sometimes overcome the cares of the spirit. For a whole fortnight had we been making our beds on the heather, and, therefore, without taking off our clothes; and that day we had walked ten miles, at least, with the soldiers, so that I slept without moving or waking all the night. In the morning I dressed quickly and hurried to the jail, not knowing whether I might be admitted or should be allowed speech of Barnaby. Outside the gate, however, I found a crowd of people going into the prison and coming out of it. Some of them, women like ourselves, were weeping—they were those whose brothers or lovers, husbands or sons, were in those gloomy walls. Others there were who brought, for such of the prisoners as had

money to buy them, eggs, butter, white bread, chickens, fruit, and all kinds of provisions ; some brought wine, cider, and ale ; some, tobacco. The warders who stood at the gates made no opposition to those who would enter. I pressed in with a beating heart, prepared for a scene of the most dreadful repentance and gloomy forebodings. What I saw was quite otherwise.

The gates of the prison opened upon a courtyard, not very big, where the people were selling their wares, and some of the prisoners were walking about, and some were chaffering with the women who had the baskets. On the right-hand side of the yard was the Clink itself ; on the left hand were houses for the warders or officers of the prison. In general a single warder, constable, or headborough is enough for a town such as Ilminster, to keep the peace of the prison, which is for the most part empty, save when they enforce some new Act against Nonconformists and fill it with them or with Quakers. Now, however, so great was the press that, instead

of two. there were a dozen guards, and, while a stout cudgel had always been weapon enough, now every man went armed with pike and cutlass to keep order and prevent escapes. Six of them occupied the gate-house : other six were within, in a sort of guard-house, where they slept on the left hand of the court.

The ground floor of the Clink we found to be a large room, at least forty feet each side in bigness. On one side of it was a great fireplace, where, though it was the month of July, there was burning a great fire of Welsh coal, partly for cooking purposes, because all that the prisoners ate was cooked at this fire ; and partly because a great fire kept continually burning sweetens the air, and wards off jail fever. On another side was a long table and several benches. Thick wooden pillars supported the joists of the rooms above ; the windows were heavily barred, but the shutters had been taken down, and there was no glass in them. In spite of fire and open windows, the place was stifling, and smelt most horrible.

Never have I breathed so foul an air. There lived in this room about eighty prisoners (later on the numbers were doubled) ; some were smoking tobacco and drinking cider or ale ; some were frying pieces of meat or smoked herrings over the fire ; and the tobacco, the ale, the wine, the cooking, and the people themselves—nearly all country lads, unwashed, who had slept since Sedgemoor, at least, in the same clothes without once changing—made so foul an air that jail fever, putrid throats, and small-pox (all of which afterwards broke out) should have been expected sooner.

They were all talking, laughing, and even singing, so that, in addition to the noisome stench of the place, there was such a din as one may hear at Sherborne Fair of an evening. I expected, as I have said, a gloomy silence with the rattling of chains, the groans of those who looked for death, and, perhaps, a godly repentance visible upon every countenance. Yet they were all laughing, except a few who sat retired and who were wounded.

I say that they were all laughing. They had nothing to expect but death, or at the best to be horribly flogged, to be transported, to be fined, branded, and ruined. Yet they laughed ! What means this hardness and indifference in men ? Could they not think of the women they had left at home ? I warrant that none of *them* were laughing.

Among them—a pipe of tobacco in his lips and a mug of strong ale before him on the table, his hat flung backwards—sat Barnaby, his face showing, apparently, complete satisfaction with his lot.

When he saw us at the door, he rose and came to meet us.

‘Welcome,’ he said. ‘This is one of the places where King Monmouth’s men are to receive the honour due to them. Courage, gentle hearts. Be not cast down. Everywhere the prisons are full, and more are brought in every day. Our very numbers are our safety. They cannot hang us all. And hark !’ here he whispered, ‘Sister, we now know that Colonel Kirke hath been

selling pardons at ten pounds, twenty pounds, and thirty pounds apiece. Wherefore we are well assured that somehow or other we shall be able to buy our release. There are plenty besides Colonel Kirke who will sell a prisoner his freedom.'

'Where is your father?' asked my mother.

'He is bestowed above, where it is quieter, except for the groaning of the wounded. Go up-stairs, and you will find him. And there is a surprise for you, besides. You will find with him one you little expect to see.'

'Oh! Barnaby, is there new misery for me? Is Robin a prisoner?'

'Robin is not here, Sis; and as for misery, why, that is as you take it. To be sure the man above is in prison, but no harm will happen to him. Why should it? He did not go out with Monmouth's men. But go up-stairs — go up-stairs — and see for yourselves.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

SIR CHRISTOPHER.

I KNOW not whom I expected to find in consequence of Barnaby's words, as we went up the dark and dirty stairs which led to the upper room. Robin was not a prisoner. Why—then—but I know not what I thought, all being strange and dreadful.

At the top of the stairs we found ourselves in a room of the same size as the lower chamber, but not so high, and darker, being a gloomy place indeed, insomuch that it was not for some minutes that one could plainly discern things. It was lighted by a low, long window, set very close with thick bars, the shutters thrown open so that all the light and air possible to be admitted might come

in. It had a great fireplace, but there was no fire burning, and the air of the room struck raw, though outside it was a warm and sunny day. The roof was supported, as in the room below, by means of thick square pillars, studded with great nails set close together, for what purpose I know not. Every part of the woodwork in the room was in the same way stuck full of nails. On the floor lay half a score mattresses, the property of those who could afford to pay the warders an exorbitant fee for the luxury. At Ilminster, as, I am told, at Newgate, the chief prison of the country, the same custom obtains of exacting heavy fees from the poor wretches clapped into ward. It is, I suppose, no sin to rob the criminal, the debtor, the traitor, or the rebel. For those who had nothing to pay there were only a few bundles of straw, and on these were lying half a dozen wretches, whose white faces and glazed eyes showed that they would indeed cheat Tom the Hangman, though not in the way that Barnaby hoped. These were wounded either in the

Sedgemoor fight or in their attempt to escape.

My father lay on a pallet bed. His face showed not the least change ; his eyes were closed, and you would have thought him dead ; and beside him, also on a pallet, sat, to my astonishment, none other than Sir Christopher himself.

He rose and came to meet us, smiling sadly.

‘Madam,’ he said, taking my mother’s hand, ‘we meet in a doleful place, and we are, indeed, in wretched plight. I cannot bid you welcome ; I cannot say that I am glad to see you. There is nothing that I can say of comfort or of hope, except, which you know already, that we are always in the hands of the Lord.’

‘Sir Christopher,’ said my mother, ‘it was kind and neighbourly in you to come. But you were always his best friend. Look at his poor white face !’ she only thought upon her husband. ‘You would think him dead ! More than a fortnight he hath lain thus—motionless. I think he feels no pain. Hus-

band, if thou canst hear me, make some sign —if it be but to open one eye ! No !' she cried. ' Day after day have I thus entreated him and he makes no answer ! He neither sees nor hears ! Yet he doth not die ; wherefore I think that he may yet recover speech and sit up again, and presently, perhaps, walk about, and address himself again unto his studies.'

She waited not for any answer, but knelt down beside him and poured some drops of milk into the mouth of the sick man. Sir Christopher looked at her mournfully and shook his head.

Then he turned to me, and kissed me without saying a word.

' Oh ! Sir,' I cried, ' how could you know that my father would be brought unto this place ? With what goodness of heart have you come to our help ! '

' Nay, Child,' he replied gravely, ' I came because I had no choice but to come. Like your father and your brother, Alice, I am a prisoner.'

‘ You, Sir ? You a prisoner ? Why, you were not with the Duke.’

‘ That is most true. And yet a prisoner. Why, after the news of Selgemoor fight I looked for nothing else. They tried to arrest Mr. Speke, but he has fled ; they have locked up Mr. Prideaux, of Ford Abbey ; Mr. Trenchard has retired across the seas. Why should they pass me over ? Nay, there were abundant proofs of my zeal for the Duke. My grandson and my grandnephew had joined the rebels. Your father and brother rode over to Lyme on my horses ; with my grandson rode off a dozen lads of the village. What more could they want ? Moreover, I am an old soldier of Lord Essex’s army ; and, to finish, they found in the window-seat a copy of Monmouth’s Declaration—which, indeed, I had forgotten, or I might have destroyed it.’

‘ Alas ! alas ! ’ I cried, wringing my hands. ‘ Your Honour, too, a prisoner ! ’

Since the Sergeant spoke to Barnaby about the interest of friends, I had been thinking that Sir Christopher, whose power and in-

terest, I fondly thought, must be equal to those of any Lord in the land, would interpose to save us all. And he was now a prisoner himself, involved in the common ruin! One who stands upon a bridge and sees with terror the last support carried away by the raging flood feels such despair as fell upon my soul.

‘Oh! Sir,’ I cried again. ‘It is Line upon Line—Woe upon Woe!’

He took my hand in his, and held it tenderly.

‘My child,’ he said, ‘to an old man of seventy-five what doth it matter whether he die in his bed or whether he die upon a scaffold? Through the pains of death, as through a gate, we enter upon our rest.’

‘It is dreadful!’ I cried again. ‘I cannot endure it!’

‘The shame and ignominy of this death,’ he said, ‘I shall, I trust, regard lightly. We have struck a blow for Freedom and for Faith. Well; we have been suffered to fail. The time hath not yet come. Yet, in the end,

others shall carry on the Cause, and Religion shall prevail. Shall we murmur who have been God's instruments?'

'Alas! alas!' I cried again.

'To me, sweet child, it is not terrible to contemplate my end. But it is sad to think of thee, and of thy grave and bitter loss. Hast thou heard news of Robin and of Humphrey?'

'Oh, Sir!—are they also in prison—are they here?'

'No; but I have news of them. I have a letter brought to me but yesterday. Read it, my child, read it.'

He pulled the letter out of his pocket and gave it to me. Then I read aloud, and thus it ran :—

'Honoured Sir and Grandfather,

'I am writing this letter from the Prison of Exeter, where, with Humphrey and about two hundred or more of our poor fellows, I am laid by the heels, and shall so continue until we shall all be tried.

'It is rumoured that Lord Jeffreys will

come down to try us, and we are assured by report that the King shows himself revengeful, and is determined that there shall be no mercy shown. After Sedgemoor fight they hanged, as you will have heard, many of the prisoners at Weston Zoyland, at Bridgwater, and at Taunton, without trial. If the King continue in this disposition it is very certain that, though the common sort may be forgiven, the gentlemen and those who were officers in the rebel army will certainly not escape. Therefore I have no hope but to conclude my life upon the gallows—a thing which, I confess, I had never looked to do. But I hope to meet my fate with courage and resignation.

‘Humphrey is with me, and it is some comfort (though I know not why) that we shall stand or fall together; for if I was a Captain in the army he was a Chyrurgeon. That he was also a secret agent of the exiles, and that he stirred up the Duke’s friends on his way from London to Sherborne, that they know not, or it would certainly go hard with

him. What do I say ? Since they will hang him, things cannot very well go harder.

‘ When the fight was over, and the Duke and Lord Grey fled, there was nothing left but to escape as best we might. I hope that some of the Bradford lads will make their way home in safety : they stood their ground and fought valiantly. Nay, if we had been able to arm all who volunteered and would have enlisted, and if our men had all shown such a spirit as your valiant lads of Bradford Orcas, then, I say, the enemy must have been cut to pieces.

‘ When we had no choice left but to run, I took the road to Bridgwater, intending to ride back to that place, where, perhaps, our forces might be rallied. But this proved hopeless. There I found, however, Humphrey, and we resolved that the safest plan would be to ride by way of Taunton and Exeter, leaving behind us the great body of the King’s army, and so escape to London if possible, where we should certainly find hiding-places in plenty until the pursuit should be at an end. Our

plan was to travel along byways and bridle-paths, and that by night only, hiding by day in barns, linneys, and the like. We had money for the charges of our journey. Humphrey would travel as a physician returning to London from the West as soon as we had gotten out of the insurgents' country ; I was to be his servant. Thus we arranged the matter in our minds, and already I thought that we were safe, and in hiding somewhere in London, or across the seas in the Low Countries again.

‘ Well, to make short my story, we got no further than Exeter, where we were betrayed by a rascal countryman who recognised us, caused us to be arrested, and swore to us. Thereupon we were clapped into jail, where we now lie.

‘ Hon’d Sir ; Humphrey, I am sorry to write, is much cast down, not because he dreads death, which he doth not, any more than to lie upon his bed ; but because he hath, he says, drawn so many to their ruin. He numbers me among those ; though, indeed, it was none of his doing, but by my own free will,

that I entered upon this business, which, contrary to reasonable expectation, hath turned out so ill. Wherefore, dear Sir, since there is no one in the world whose opinion and counsel Humphrey so greatly considers as your own, I pray you, of your goodness, send him some words of consolation and cheer.'

'That will I, right readily,' said Sir Christopher. 'At least the poor lad cannot accuse himself of dragging me into the Clink.'

'I hear,' continued Robin's letter, 'that my mother hath gone with Mr. Boscorel to London, to learn if aught can be done for us. If she do not return before we are finished, bid her think kindly of Humphrey and not to lay these things to his charge. As for my dear girl, my Alice, I hear nothing of her. Miss Blake, who led the Maids when they gave the flags to the Duke, is, I hear, clapped into prison. Alice is not spoken of. I am greatly perturbed in spirit concerning her, and I would gladly, if that might be compassed, have speech with her before I die. I fear she will grieve and weep; but not more than I myself at

leaving her, poor maid ! I hear, also, nothing concerning her father, who was red-hot for the Cause, and therefore, I fear, will not be passed over or forgotten. Nor do I hear aught of Barnaby, who, I hope, hath escaped on ship-board, as he said that he should do if things went ajar. Where are they all ? The roads are covered with rough men, and it is not fit for such as Alice and her mother to be travelling. I hope that they have returned in safety to Bradford Orcas, and that my old master, Dr. Eykin, hath forgotten his zeal for the Protestant Duke, and is already seated again among his books. If that is so, tell Alice, Honoured Sir, that there is no hour of the day or night but I think of her continually ; that the chief pang of my approaching fate is the thought that I shall leave her in sorrow, and that I cannot say or do anything to stay her sorrow. Comfort her I cannot, save with words which will come better from the saintly lips of her father. I again pray thee to assure her of my faithful love. Tell her that the recollection of her sweet face and steadfast eyes

fills me with so great a longing that I would fain die at once so as to bring nearer the moment when we shall be able to sit together in heaven. My life hath been glorified, if I may say so in humility, by her presence in my heart, which drove away all common and unclean things. Of such strength is earthly love. Nay, I could not, I now perceive, be happy even with the joys of heaven if she were not by my side. Where is she, my heart, my love? Pray God, she is in safety.

‘And now, Sir, I have no more to say. The prison is a hot and reeking place; at night it is hard to bear the foulness and the stench of it. Humphrey says that we may shortly expect some jail fever or smallpox to break out among us, in which case the work of the Judges may be lightened. The good people of this ancient city are in no way afraid of the King’s vindictiveness, but send in of their bounty quantity of provisions—fruit, eggs, fresh meat, salted meat, ale, and cider—every day for the poor prisoners, which shows which way their opinions do lean, even although

the clergy are against us. Honoured Sir, I am sure and certain that the miscarriage of our enterprise was caused by the conduct of those who had us in hand. In a year or two there shall be seen (but not by us) another uprising ; under another leader with another end.

‘ So no more. I send to thee, dear and Honoured Sir, my bounden duty and my grateful thanks for all that I owe to your tender care and affection. Pray my mother, for me, to mourn no more for me than is becoming to one of her piety and virtue.

‘ Alas ! it is thinking upon her, and upon my poor lost Alice, that my heart is wellnigh torn in pieces. But (tell Humphrey) through no fault—no— through no fault of his.

‘ From thy dutiful and obedient grandson,—
‘ R. C.’

I read this all through. Then I folded up the letter and returned it to Sir Christopher. As he took it the tears came into his dear and venerable eyes and rolled down his cheeks.

‘My dear—my dear,’ he said, ‘it is hard to bear. Everyone who is dear to thee will go ; there is an end of all ; unless some way, of which we know nothing, be opened unto us.’

‘Why.’ I said, ‘if we were all dead and buried, and our souls together in heaven’——

‘Patience, my dear,’ said the old man.

‘Oh ! must they all die—all ? My heart will burst ! Oh ! Sir, will not one suffice for all ? Will they not take me and hang me, and let the rest go free ?’

‘Child,’ he took my hand between his own, ‘God knows that if one life would suffice for all, it should be mine. Nay, I would willingly die ten times over to save thy Robin for thee. He is not dead yet, however. Nor is he sentenced. There are so many involved that we may hope for a large measure of mercy. Nay, more. His mother hath gone to London, as he says in his letter, with my son-in-law, Philip Boscorel, to see if aught can be done, even to the selling of my whole estate, to procure the enlargement of the boys. I know not

if anything can be done, but be assured Philip Boscorel will leave no stone unturned.'

'Oh ! can money buy a pardon ? I have two hundred gold pieces. They are Barnaby's'——

'Then, my dear, they must be used to buy pardon for Barnaby and thy father—though I doubt whether any pardon need be bought for one who is brought so low.'

Beside the bed my mother sat crouched, watching his white face as she had done all day long in our hiding-place. I think she heeded nothing that went on around her, being wrapped in her hopes and prayers for the wounded man.

Then Sir Christopher kissed me gently on the forehead.

'They say the King is unforgiving, my dear. Expect not, therefore, anything. Say to thyself, every morning, that all must die. To know the worst brings with it something of consolation. Robin must die ; Humphrey must die ; your brother Barnaby must die ; your father—but he is wellnigh dead already—and I myself, all must die upon the scaffold

if we escape this noisome jail. In thinking of this, remember who will be left. My dear, if thou art as a widow and yet a maiden, I charge thee solemnly that thou forget thine own private griefs and minister to those who will have none but thee to help them. Live not for thyself, but to console and solace those who, like thyself bereavel, will need thy tender cares.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEFORE THE ASSIZE.



we sat down and waited. 'Twas all that we could do. Day after day we went to the prison, where my mother sat by my father, whose condition never changed in the least, being always that of one who slept, or, if his

eyes were open, was unconscious, and though he might utter a few rambling words, had no command of his mind or of his speech.

Wherefore we hoped that he suffered nothing. ‘ ’Twas a musket ball had struck,’ the surgeon said, ‘ in his backbone between the shoulders, whereby his powers of motion and of thought were suspended.’ I know not whether anyone attempted to remove the ball, or whether it was lodged there at all, because I am ignorant of such matters ; and to me, whether he had been struck in the back or no, it was to my mind sure and certain that the Lord had granted my father’s earnest prayer that he should again be permitted to deliver openly the message that was upon his soul ; nay, had given him three weeks of continual and faithful preaching, the fruits of which, could we perceive them, should be abundant. That prayer granted, the Lord, I thought, was calling him to rest. Therefore, I looked for no improvement.

One other letter came from Robin, inclosing one for me, with which (because I could not leave my mother at such a time) I was forced to stay my soul, as the lover in the Canticle stayeth his soul with apples. I have

that letter still ; it hath been with me always ; it lay hanging from my neck in the little leather bag in which I carried the Duke's ring ; I read it again and again until I knew it by heart ; yet still I read it again, because even to look at my lover's writing had in it something of comfort even when things were at their worst, and Egyptian darkness lay upon my soul. But this letter I cannot endure to copy out or suffer others to read it, because it was written for mine own eye in such a time of trouble. ' Oh ! my love ! ' he said. ' Oh, my tender heart ! ' and then a hundred prayers for my happiness, and tears for my tears, and hopes for the future (which would be not the earthly life but the future reserved by merciful Heaven for those who have been called and chosen). As for the sharp and painful passage by which we must travel from this world to the next, Robin bade me take no thought of that at all, but to think of him either as my lover walking with me as of old beside the stream at home, or as a spirit waiting for me to join him in the heavenly choir. And so

ending with as many farewells (the letter being written when he expected the Judges to arrive and the Assize to begin) as showed his tender love for me. No—I cannot write down this letter for the eyes of all to read. There are things which must be kept hidden in our own hearts ; and, without doubt, every woman to whom good fortune hath given a lover such as Robin, with a heart as fond and a pen as ready (though he could never, like Humphrey, write sweet verses), hath received an epistle or two like unto mine for its love and tenderness, but (I hope) without the sadness of impending death.

It was four weeks after we were brought to Ilminster that the news came to us of the coming trials. There were five Judges—but the world knows but of one, namely, George Lord Jeffreys, Chief Justice of England—and now, indeed, we began to understand the true misery of our situation. For every one knew the character of the Judge, who, though a young man still, was already the terror alike of prisoners, witnesses, and juries. It pro-

mised to be a black and bloody Assize indeed, since this man was to be the Judge.

The aspect of the prison by this time was changed. The songs and merriment, the horseplay and loud laughter by which the men had at first endeavoured to keep up their hearts were gone. The country lads pined and languished in confinement; their cheeks grew pale and their eyes heavy. Then, the prison was so crowded that there was barely room for all to lie at night, and the yard was too small for all to walk therein by day. In the morning, though they opened all the shutters, the air was so foul that in going into it from the open one felt sick and giddy, and was sometimes fain to run out and drink cold water. Oh! the terrible place for an old man such as Sir Christopher! Yet he endured without murmuring the foulness and the hardness, comforting the sick, still reproving blasphemies, and setting an example of cheerfulness. The wounded men all died, I believe; which, as the event proved, was lucky for them. It would have saved the rest much

suffering if they had all died as well. And to think that this was only one of many prisons thus crowded with poor captives! At Wells, Philip's Norton, Shepton Mallet, Bath, Bridgewater, Taunton, Ilchester, Somerton, Langport, Bristol and Exeter, there was a like assemblage of poor wretches thus awaiting their trials.

I said that there was now little singing. There was, however, drinking enough, and more than enough. They drank to drown their sorrows, and to forget the horrid place in which they lay and the future which awaited them. When they were drunk they would bellow some of their old songs; but the bawling of a drunkard will not communicate to his companions the same joy as the music of a merry heart.

While we were expecting to hear that the Judge had arrived at Salisbury, the fever broke out in the prison of Ilminster. At Wells they were afflicted with the smallpox, but at Ilminster it was jail fever which fell upon the poor prisoners. Everybody hath heard

of this terrible disorder, which is communicated by those who have it to those who go among them—namely, to the warders and turnkeys, and even to the judges and the juries. On the first day after it broke out—which was with an extraordinary virulence—four poor men died and were buried the next morning. After this, no day passed but there were funerals at the churchyard, and the mounds of their graves—the graves of these poor countrymen who thought to fight the battles of the Lord—stood side by side in a long row, growing continually longer. We—that is, good Mrs. Prior and myself—sat at the window and watched the funerals, praying for the safety of those we loved.

So great was the fear of infection in the town that no one was henceforth allowed within the prison, nor were the warders allowed to come out of it. This was a sad order for me, because my mother chose to remain within the prison, finding a garret at the house of the Chief Constable, and I could no longer visit that good old man, Sir Chris-

topher, whose only pleasure left had been to converse with me daily, and, as I now understand, by the refreshment the society of youth brings to age, to lighten the tedium of his imprisonment.

Henceforth, therefore, I went to the prison-door every morning and sent in my basket of provisions, but was not suffered to enter ; and though I could have speech with my mother or with Barnaby, they were on one side the bars and I on the other.

It was at this time that I made the acquaintance of Mr. George Penne. This creature—a villain, as I afterwards discovered, of the deepest dye—was to external appearance a grave and sober merchant. He was dressed in brown cloth and laced shirt, and carried a gold-headed stick in his hand. He came to Ilminster about the end of August or the beginning of September, and began to inquire particularly into the names and the circumstances of the prisoners, pretending (such was his craftiness) a great tenderness for their welfare. He did the same thing, we

heard afterwards, wherever the Monmouth prisoners were confined. At Ilminster, the fever being in the jail, he did not venture within, but stood outside and asked of any who seemed to know, who were the prisoners within, and what were their circumstances.

He accosted me one morning when I was standing at the wicket waiting for my basket to be taken in.

‘Madam,’ he said, ‘you are doubtless a friend of some poor prisoner. Your father or your brother may unhappily be lying within?’

Now I was grown somewhat cautious by this time. Wherefore, fearing some kind of snare or trap, I replied gravely, that such, indeed, might be the case.

‘Then, Madam,’ he said, speaking in a soft voice and looking full of compassion, ‘if that be so, suffer me, I pray you, to wish him a happy deliverance; and this, indeed, from the bottom of my heart.’

‘Sir,’ I said, moved by the earnestness of



'I was standing at the wicket waiting for my basket to be taken in.'

his manner. 'I know not who you may be, but I thank you. Such a wish, I hope, will not procure you the reward of a prison. Sir, I wish you a good day.'

So he bowed and left me, and passed on.

But next day I found him in the same place. And his eyes were more filled with compassion than before and his voice was softer.

'I cannot sleep, Madam,' he said, 'for thinking of these poor prisoners ; I hear that among them is none other than Sir Christopher Challis, a gentleman of great esteem and well stricken in years. And there is also the pious and learned—but most unfortunate—Dr. Comfort Eykin, who rode with the army and preached daily, and is now, I hear, grievously wounded and bedridden.'

'Sir,' I said, 'Dr. Comfort Eykin is my father. It is most true that he is a prisoner, and that he is wounded.'

He heaved a deep sigh and wiped a tear from his eyes.

'It is now certain,' he said, 'that Lord

Jeffreys will come down to conduct the trials. Nay, it is reported that he has already arrived at Salisbury, breathing fire and revenge, and that he hath with him four other Judges and a troop of horse. What they will do with so many prisoners I know not. I fear that it will go hard with all ; but, as happens in such cases, those who have money, and know how to spend it, may speedily get their liberty.'

'How are they to spend it?'

'Why, Madam, it is not indeed to be looked for that you should know. But when the time comes for the trial, should I, as will very likely happen, be in the way, send for me, and whatever the sentence I warrant we shall find a way to 'scape it—even if it be a sentence of death. Send for me—my name is George Penne, and I am a well-known merchant of Bristol.'

It was then that Barnaby came to the other side of the wicket. We could talk, but could not touch each other.

'All is well, Sis,' he said : 'Dad is neither

better nor worse, and Sir Christopher is hearty, though the prison is like the 'tween decks of a ship with Yellow Jack aboard—just as sweet and pleasant for the air and just as merry for the crew.'

'Barnaby,' I said, 'the Judges are now at Salisbury.'

'Ay, ay ; I thought they would have been there before. We shall be tried, they tell me, at Wells, which it is thought will be taken after other towns. So there is still a tidy length of rope. Sis, this continual smoking of tobacco to keep off infection doth keep a body dry. Cider will serve, but let it be a runlet, at least.'

'He called you "Sister," Madam,' said Mr. Penne, curiously. 'Have you brother as well as father in this place?'

'Alas ! Sir, I have not only my father, my mother, and my brother in this place, but my father-in-law (as I hoped soon to call him) ; and in Exeter Jail is my lover and his cousin. Oh ! Sir, if you mean honestly'——

'Madam'—he laid his hand upon his

breast—‘I assure you I am all honesty. I have no other thought, I swear to you, than to save, if possible, the lives of these poor men.’

He walked with me to my lodging, and I there told him not only concerning our own people, but also all that I knew of the prisoners in this jail—they were for the most part poor and humble men. He made notes in a book, which caused me some misgivings ; but he assured me again and again that all he desired was to save their lives. And I now understand that he spoke the truth indeed, but not the whole truth.

‘Your brother, for instance,’ he said. ‘Oh ! Madam, ’twere a thousand pities that so brave a young man, so stout withal, should be hanged, drawn, and quartered. And your lover at Exeter, doubtless a tall and proper youth ; and the other whom you have named, Dr. Humphrey Challis, and your grandfather (as I hope he will be) Sir Christopher ; and your own father—why, Madam,’ he grew quite warm upon it, ‘if you will but furnish some

honest merchant—I say not myself, because I know not yet if you would trust me—but some honest merchant with the necessary moneys, I will engage that they shall all be saved from hanging. To be sure, these are all captains and officers, and to get their absolute pardon will be a great matter—perhaps above your means. Yet, Sir Christopher hath a good estate, I am told.’

This George Penne was, it is true, a Bristol merchant, engaged in the West India trade ; that is to say, he bought sugar and tobacco, and had shares in ships which sailed to and from Bristol and the West Indies, and sometimes made voyages to the Guinea Coast for negroes. But, in common with many Bristol merchants, he had another trade, and a very profitable trade it is, namely, what is called kidnapping : that is, buying or otherwise securing criminals who have been pardoned or reprieved on condition of going to the Plantations. They sell these wretches for a term of years to the planters, and make a great profit by the transaction. And, foreseeing that there

would presently be a rare abundance of such prisoners, the honest Mr. George Penne was going from prison to prison finding out what persons of substance there were who would willingly pay for their sentence to be thus mitigated. In the event, though things were not ordered exactly as he could have wished, this worthy man (his true worth you shall presently hear) made a pretty penny, as the saying is, out of the prisoners. What he made out of us, and by what lies, you shall learn ; but, by ill-fortune for him, he gat not the fingering of the great sums which he hoped of us.

And now the news—from Winchester first, and from Dorchester afterwards—filled the hearts of all with a dismay which it is beyond all power of words to tell. For if an ancient lady of good repute (though the widow of a regicide), such a woman as Lady Lisle, seventy years of age, could be condemned to be burned—and was, in fact, beheaded—for no greater offence than harbouring two rebels, herself ignorant of who

they were or whence they came, what could any hope who had actually borne arms? And, again, at Dorchester, thirty who pleaded not guilty were found guilty and condemned to be hanged, and nearly three hundred who pleaded guilty were sentenced to be hanged at the same time. It was not an idle threat intended to terrify the rest, because thirteen of the number were executed on the following Monday, and eighty afterwards. Among those who were first hanged were many whom we knew. The aged and pious Mr. Sampson Larke, the Baptist Minister of Lyme, for instance, was one; Colonel Holmes (whom the King had actually pardoned) was another; and young Mr. Hewling—whose case was like that of Robin. This terrible news caused great despondency and choking in the prison, where also the fever daily carried off one or two.

Oh! my poor heart fell, and I almost lost the power of prayer, when I heard that from Dorchester the Judge was riding in great

state, driving his prisoners before him to Exeter, where there were two hundred waiting their trial. And among them Robin—Alas! alas!—my Robin!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BENJAMIN.

IT was the evening of September the Sixteenth, about nine of the clock. I was sitting alone in my lodging. Downstairs I heard the voice of the poor widow, Mrs. Prior, who had received us. She was praying aloud with some godly friends for the safety of her sons. These young men, as I have said, were never more heard of, and were therefore already, doubtless, past praying for. I, who ought to have been praying with them, held Robin's last letter in my hands. I knew it by heart; but I must still be reading it again and again; thinking it was his voice which was indeed speaking to me, trying to feel his presence near me, to hear his breath,

to see his very eyes. In the night, waking or sleeping, I still would hear him calling to me aloud. ‘My heart! my life! my love!’ he would cry. I heard him, I say, quite plainly. By special mercy and grace this power was accorded to me; because I have no doubt that in his mind, while lying in his noisome prison, he did turn his thoughts, yea, and the yearnings of his fond heart, to the maid he loved. But now the merciless Judge who had sentenced three hundred men to one common doom—three hundred men!—was such a sentence ever known?—had left Dorchester, and was already, perhaps, at Exeter. Oh!—perhaps Robin had by this time stood his trial: what place was left for prayer? For if the poor, ignorant clowns were condemned to death, how much more the gentlemen, the officers of Monmouth’s army! Perhaps he was already executed—my lover, my boy, my Robin!—taken out and hanged, and now a cold and senseless corpse! Then the wailings and prayers of the poor woman below, added to the distrac-

tion of these thoughts, made me feel as if I was indeed losing my senses. At this time, it was blow upon blow—line upon line. The sky was black—the heavens were deaf. Is there—can there be—a more miserable thing than to feel that the very heavens are deaf? The mercy of the Lord—His kindly hearkening to our cries and prayers—these we believe as we look for the light of day and the warmth of the sun. Nay, this belief is the very breath of our life: so that there is none but the most hardened and abandoned sinner who doth not still feel that he hath in the Lord a Father as well as a Judge. To lose that belief—'twere better to be a lump of senseless clay. The greatest misery of the lost soul, even greater than his continual torment of fire, and his never-ending thirst, and the gnawing of remorse, must be to feel that the heavens are deaf to his prayers—deaf for ever and for ever!

At this time, my prayers were all for safety. 'Safety, good Lord! give them safety! Save them from the executioner!

‘Give them safety!’ Thus, as Barnaby said, the shipwrecked mariner clinging to the mast asks not for a green, pleasant, and fertile shore, but for land—only for land. I sat there, musing sadly, the Bible on the table and a lighted candle. I read not in the Bible, but listened to the wailing of the poor soul below, and looked at the churchyard without, the moonlight falling upon the fresh mounds which covered the graves of the poor dead prisoners. Suddenly I heard a voice—a loud and harsh voice—and footsteps. I knew both footsteps and voice, and I sprang to my feet trembling, because I was certain that some new disaster had befallen us.

Then the steps mounted the stairs ; the door was opened, and Benjamin—none other than Benjamin—appeared. What did he here? He was so big, with so red a face, that his presence seemed to fill the room. And with him—what did this mean?—came Madam herself, who I thought to have been at Exeter. Alas! her eyes were red with

weeping ; her cheeks were thin and wasted with sorrow ; her lips were trembling.

‘Alice!’ she cried, holding out her hands. ‘Child, these terrible things are done, and yet we live! Alas! we live! Are our hearts made of stone that we still live? As for me, I cannot die, though I lose all—all—all!’

‘Dear Madam, what hath happened? More misery! More disaster! Oh! tell me! tell me!’

‘Oh! my dear, they have been tried—they have been tried, and they are condemned to die—both Robin—my son Robin—and with him Humphrey, who dragged him into the business and alone ought to suffer for both. But there is now no justice in the land. No—no more justice can be had. Else Humphrey should have suffered for all.’

There was something strange in her eyes—she did not look like a mother robbed of her children; she gazed upon me as if there was something else upon her mind.

As if the condemnation of her son was not enough.

‘Robin will be hanged,’ she went on. ‘He hath been the only comfort of my life since my husband was taken from me, when he was left an infant in my arms. Robin will be hanged like any common gipsy caught stealing a sheep. He will be hanged, and drawn and quartered, and those goodly limbs of his will be stuck upon poles for all to see!’

Truly I looked for nothing less. Barnaby bade me look for nothing less than this; but at the news I fell into a swoon. So one who knoweth beforehand that he is to feel the surgeon’s knife, and thinks to endure the agony without a cry, is fain to shriek and scream when the moment comes.

When I recovered I was sitting at the open window, Madam applying a wet cloth to my forehead.

‘Have no fear,’ Benjamin was saying. ‘She will do what you command her, so only that he may go free.’

‘Is there no way but that?’ she asked.

‘None!’ And then he swore a great oath.

My eyes being open and my sense returned, I perceived that Mrs. Prior was also in the room. And I wondered (in such moments the mind finds relief in trifles) that Benjamin’s face should have grown so red and his cheeks so fat.

‘Thou hast been in a swoon, my dear,’ said Madam. ‘But ’tis past.’

‘Why is Benjamin here?’ I asked.

He looked at Madam, who cast down her eyes, I knew not why.

‘Benjamin is now our only friend,’ she replied without looking up. ‘It is out of his kindness—yes—his kindness of heart that he hath come.’

‘I do not understand. If Robin is to die what kindness can he show?’

‘Tell her, Benjamin,’ said Madam, ‘tell her of the trials at Exeter.’

‘His Lordship came to Exeter,’ Benjamin began, ‘on the evening of September the

Thirteenth, escorted by many country gentlemen and a troop of horse. I had the honour of riding with him. The trials began the day before yesterday, the Fourteenth.'

'Pray, good Sir,' asked the poor woman who had lost her son, 'did you observe my boys among the prisoners?'

'How the devil should I know your boys?' he replied, turning upon her roughly, so that she asked no more questions. 'If they were rebels they deserve hanging'—here she shrieked aloud, and fled the room. 'The trials began with two fellows who pleaded "Not guilty," but were quickly proved to have been in arms, and were condemned to death, one of them being sent out to instant execution. The rest who were brought up that day—among whom were Robin and Humphrey—pleaded "Guilty," being partly terrified and partly persuaded that it was their only chance of escape. So they, too, were condemned—two hundred and forty in all—every man Jack of them, to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and their limbs to be afterwards stuck on poles

for the greater terror of evildoers'—he said these words with such a fire in his eyes, and in such a dreadful threatening voice, as made me tremble. 'Then they were all taken back to jail, where they will lie until the day of execution, and the Lord have mercy upon their souls!'

The terrible Judge Jeffreys himself could not look more terrible than Benjamin when he uttered the prayer with which a sentence to death is concluded.

'Benjamin, were you in the court to see and hear the condemnation of your own cousins?'

'I was. I sat in the body of the court, in the place reserved for Counsel.'

'Could you say nothing that would help them?'

'Nothing. Not a word from anyone could help them. Consider—one of them was an officer, and one a surgeon, in the army. The ignorant rustics whom they led may some of them escape, but the officers can look for no mercy.'

‘Madam,’ I cried, ‘I must see Robin before he dies ; though, God knows, there are those here who want my services daily. Yet I must see Robin. He will not die easy unless he can see me and kiss me once.’

Madam made no reply.

‘For a week,’ said Benjamin, ‘they are safe. I do not think they will be executed for a week at least. But it is not wise to reckon on a reprieve even for an hour : the Judge may at any time order their execution.’

‘I will go to-morrow.’

‘That will be seen,’ said Benjamin.

‘My dear,’ said Madam, ‘my nephew Benjamin is a friend of the Judge, Lord Jeffreys.’

‘Say rather a follower and admirer of that great, learned, and religious man. One who is yet but a member of the Outer Bar must not assume the style and title of friend to a man whose next step must be the Wool-sack.’

Heavens ! He called the inhuman wretch who had sentenced an innocent old woman of seventy to be burned alive, and five hundred

persons to be hanged, and one knows not how many to be inhumanly flogged—great and religious!

‘If interest can save any,’ Madam said softly, ‘Benjamin can command that interest, and he is on the side of mercy, especially where his cousins are concerned.’

I now observed that Madam, who had not formerly been wont to regard her nephew with much affection, behaved towards him with the greatest respect and submission.

‘Madam,’ he replied, ‘you know the goodness of my heart. What man can do shall be done by me, not only for Robin, but for the others who are involved with him in common ruin. But there are conditions with which I have taken pains to acquaint you.’

Madam sighed heavily, and looked as if she would speak, but refrained; and I saw the tears rolling down her cheeks.

‘What conditions, Benjamin?’ I asked him. ‘Conditions for trying to save your own cousins and your own grandfather! Conditions? Why, you should be moving

heaven and earth for them instead of making conditions.'

'It needs not so much exertion,' he replied with an unbecoming grin. 'First, Alice, I must own, Child, that the two years or thereabouts since I saw thee last have added greatly to thy charms ; at which I rejoice.'

'Oh! what have my charms to do with the business.'

'Much ; as thou wilt presently discover. But let me remind you both that there threaten—nay, there are actually overhanging—disasters, the like of which never happen save in time of civil war and of rebellion. My grandfather is in prison, and will be tried on a charge of sending men and horses to join Monmouth. Nay, the Duke's Proclamation was found in his house ; he will be certainly condemned and his estates confiscated. So there will be an end of as old a family as lives in Somerset. Then there is thy father, Child, who was Preacher to the army, and did make mischief in stirring up the fanatical zeal of many. Think you that he can escape ? Then

there is thy brother Barnaby, who was such a fool as to meddle in what concerned him not, and now will hang therefor. What can we expect? Are men to go unpunished who thus rebel against the Lord's Anointed? Is treason—rank treason—the setting up of a Pretender Prince (who is now lying headless in his coffin) as the rightful heir, to be forgiven? We must not look for it. Alas! Madam, had I been with you instead of that conceited, fanatical, crookback Humphrey, whom I did ever detest, none of these things should have happened.'

'Humphrey,' I said, 'has more worth in one finger than you in all your great body, Benjamin.'

'My dear, my dear, do not anger Benjamin. Oh, do not anger our only friend!'

'She may say what she pleases. My time will come. Listen then. They must all be hanged unless I can succeed in getting them pardoned.'

'Nay—but—forgive my rudeness, Benjamin; they are your own cousins—it is your

own grandfather. What need of conditions ? Oh ! what does this mean ? Are you a man of flesh and blood ? ’

‘ My conditions, Child ’—why did he laugh ?—‘ will assure you that such is truly the nature of my composition.’

‘ If money is wanted ’—I thought of my bag of gold and of Mr. Penne’s hints—‘ how much will suffice ? ’

‘ I know not. If it comes to buying them off, more thousands than could be raised on [the Bradford Orcas estates. Put money out of mind.’

‘ Then, Benjamin, save them if thou canst.’

‘ His Lordship knows that I have near relations concerned in the Rebellion. Yet, he assured me if his own brothers were among the prisoners he would hang them all.’

‘ Nay, then, Benjamin ; I say no more. Tell me what are these conditions, and, if we can grant or contrive them, we will comply.’ I had no thought of what was meant by his

conditions, nor did I even guess until the morning, when Madam told me. ‘Oh! Madam, is there anything in the world—anything that we would not do to save them?’

Madam looked at me with so much pity in her eyes that I wondered. It was pity for me and not for her son that I read in that look. Why did she pity me?

I understood not.

‘My dear,’ she said, ‘there are times when women are called upon to make sacrifices which they never thought to make, which seem impossible to be even asked’——

‘Oh! there are no sacrifices which we would not gladly make. What can Benjamin require that we should not gladly do for him? Nay, he is Robin’s cousin, and your nephew, and Sir Christopher’s grandson. He will, if need be, join us in making these sacrifices.’

‘I will,’ said Benjamin—again, why did he laugh?—‘I will join you in making one sacrifice at least, with a willing heart.’

‘I will tell her to-morrow,’ said Madam.

‘No, I cannot tell her to-night. Let us first rest. Go, Sir ; leave us to our sorrow. It may be that we may yet think the sacrifice too great even for the lives and the safety of those we love. Go, Sir, for to-night, and return to-morrow.’

‘Surely, Child,’ said Madam presently, when he was gone, and we were alone, ‘we are the most unhappy women in the world.’

‘Nay,’ I replied. ‘There have been other women before us who have been ruined and widowed by civil wars and rebellions. If it be any comfort to think that others have suffered like ourselves, then we may comfort ourselves. But the thought brings no consolation to me.’

‘Hagar,’ said Madam, ‘was a miserable woman because she was cast out by the man she loved, even the father of her son ; but she saved her son. Rachel was unhappy until the Lord gave her a son. Jephthah’s daughter was unhappy—my dear, there is no case

except hers which may be compared with ours—and Jephthah's daughter was happy in one circumstance : that she was permitted to die. Ah! happy girl, she died! That was all her sacrifice—to die for the sake of her father! But what is ours ?'

So she spoke in riddles or dark sayings, of which I understood nothing. Nevertheless, before lying down, I did solemnly and, in her presence and hearing, aloud, upon my knees, offer unto Almighty God myself—my very life—if so that Robin could be saved. And then, with lighter heart than I had known for long, I lay down and slept.

At midnight, or thereabouts, Madam woke me up.

'Child,' she said, 'I cannot sleep. Tell me truly : is there nothing that thou wouldst refuse for Robin's sake ?'

'Nothing, verily! Ah, Madam, can you doubt it ?'

'Even if it were a sacrifice of which he would not approve ?'

‘Believe me, Madam, there is nothing that I would not do for Robin’s safety.’

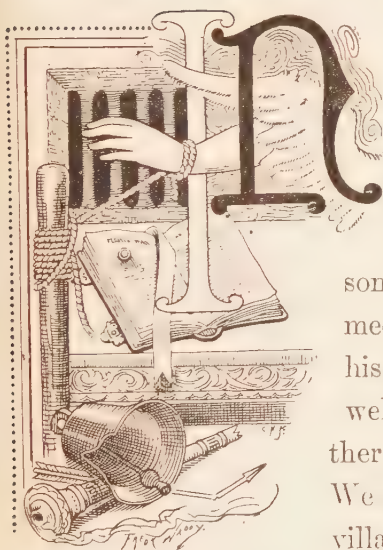
‘Child, if we were living in the days of persecution wouldest thou hear the Mass and adopt the Catholic religion to save thy lover’s life?’

‘Oh, Madam, the Lord will never try us above our strength!’

‘Sleep, my child, sleep; and pray that, as thy temptation, so may be thy strength!’

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON WHAT CONDITIONS ?



the morning I awoke with a lighter heart than I had known for a long time.

Benjamin was going to release our prisoners ! I should go to meet Robin at the gate of his prison. All would be well, except that my father would never recover. We should return to the village and everything would go on as before. Oh ! poor fond wretch ! how was I deluded ! and, oh ! miserable day that ended with such shame and sadness, yet began with so much hope !

Madam was already dressed. She was sitting at the window looking into the churchyard. She had been crying. Alas ! how many women in Somersetshire were then weeping all day long !

‘Madam,’ I said, ‘we now have hope. We must not weep and lament any more. Oh ! to have at last a little hope—when we have lived so long in despair—it makes one breathe again. Benjamin will save our prisoners for us. Oh ! after all, it is Benjamin who will help us. We did not use to love Benjamin, because he was rude and masterful and wanted everything for himself and would never give up anything. Yet, you see, he had, after all, a good heart.’ Madam groaned. ‘And he cannot forget, though he followeth not his grandfather’s opinions, that he is his Honour’s grandson—the son of his only daughter—and your nephew, and first cousin to Robin, and second cousin once removed to Humphrey and Barnaby ; playfellows of old. Why, these are ties which bind him as if with ropes !

He needs must bestir himself to save their lives. And since he says that he can save them, of course he must have bestirred himself to some purpose. Weep no more, dear Madam; your son will be restored to us! We shall be happy again—thanks to Benjamin!’

‘Child,’ she replied, ‘my heart is broken! It is broken, I say! Oh, to be lying dead and at peace in yonder churchyard! Never before did I think that it must be a happy thing to be dead and at rest, and to feel nothing and to know nothing!’

‘But, Madam, the dead are not in their graves. There lie only the bodies. Their souls are above.’

‘Then they still think and remember. Oh! can a time ever come when things can be forgotten? Will the dead ever cease to reproach themselves?’

She wrung her hands in an ecstacy of grief, though I knew not what should move her so. Indeed, she was commonly a woman of sober and contained disposition, entirely

governed both in her temper and her words. What was in her mind that she should accuse herself? Then, while I was dressing, she went on talking, being still full of this strong passion.

‘I shall have my boy back again,’ she said. ‘Yes; he will come back to me. And what will he say to me when I tell him all? Yet I *must* have him back. Oh! to think of the hangman tying the rope about his neck’—she shuddered and trembled—‘and afterwards the cruel knife’—she clasped her hands and could not say the words—‘I see the comely limbs of my boy. Oh! the thought tears my heart—it tears me through and through. I cannot think of anything else day or night. And yet in the prison he is so patient and so cheerful. I marvel that men can be so patient with this dreadful death before them.’ She broke out again into another passion of sobbing and crying. Then she became calmer, and tried to speak of things less dreadful.

‘When first I visited my boy in prison,’

she said, ‘Humphrey came humbly to ask my pardon. Poor lad ! I have had hard thoughts of him. It is certain that he was in the plot from the beginning. Yet had he not gone so far, should we have sat down when the rising began ? But he doth still accuse himself of rashness and calls himself the cause of all our misfortunes. He fell upon his knees, in the sight of all, to ask forgiveness, saying that it was he and none other who had brought ruin upon us all. Then Robin begged me to raise him up and comfort him, which I did, putting aside my hard thoughts and telling him that, being such stubborn Protestants, our lads could not choose but join the Duke, whether he advised it or whether he did not. Nay, I told him that Robin would have dragged him willy nilly. And so I kissed him, and Robin took him by the hand and solemnly assured him that his grandfather had no such thought in his mind.

‘Nay,’ I said, ‘my father and Barnaby would certainly have joined the Duke,

Humphrey or not. Never were any men more eager for rebellion.'

'I have been to London,' she went on. "'Tis a long journey and I effected nothing; for the mind of the King, I was assured, is harder than the nether millstone. My brother-in-law, Philip Boscorel, went with me, and I left him there. But I have no hope that he will be able to help us, his old friends being much scattered and many of them dead, and some hostile to the Court and in ill-favour. So I returned, seeing that, if I could not save my son I could be with him until he died. The day before yesterday he was tried—if you call that a trial when hundreds together plead guilty and are all alike sentenced to death.'

'Have you seen him since the trial?'

'I went to the prison as soon as they were brought back from Court. Some of the people—for they were all condemned to death—every one—were crying and lamenting. And there were many women among them—their wives or their mothers—and these were

shrieking and wringing their hands ; so that it was a terrible spectacle. But some of the men called for drink, and began to carouse, so that they might drown the thought of impending death. My dear, I never thought to look upon a scene so full of horror. As for our own boys, Robin was patient and even cheerful ; and Humphrey, leading us to the most quiet spot in that dreadful place, exhorted us to lose no time in weeping or vain laments, but to cheer and console our hearts with the thought that death—even violent death—is but a brief pang and life is but a short passage, and that heaven awaits us beyond. Humphrey should have been a godly minister, such is the natural piety and goodness of his heart. So he spoke of the happy meeting in that place of blessedness where earthly love would be purged of its grossness, and our souls shall be so glorified that we shall each admire the beauty and the excellence of the other. Then Robin talked of thee, my dear, and sent thee a loving message bidding thee grieve for him, but not without

hope—and that a sure and certain hope—of meeting again. There are other things he bade me tell thee ; but now I cannot !—oh, I must not !’

‘ Nay, Madam ; but if they are words that he wished me to hear ’——

‘ Why, they were of his constant love and—and—no, I cannot tell them !’

‘ Well,’ I said, ‘ fret not thy poor heart with thinking any more of the prison ; for Benjamin will surely save him, and then we shall love Benjamin all our lives.’

‘ He will, perhaps, save him. And yet’—she turned her head—‘ Oh, how can I tell *her*—we shall shed many more tears. How can I tell *her* ? How can I tell *her* ?’

So she broke off again, but presently recovered and went on talking. In time of great trouble the mind wanders backwards and forwards, and though one talks still, it is disjointedly. So she went back to the prison.

‘ The boys have been well, though the prison is full and the air is foul. Yet there hath been as yet no fever, for which they are

thankful. They had no money, the soldiers who took them prisoners having robbed them of their money, and indeed stripped them as well to their shirts, telling them that shirts were good enough to be hanged in. Yet the people of Exeter have treated the prisoners with great humanity, bringing them daily food and drink, so that there has been nothing lacking. The time, however, doth hang upon hands in a place where there is nothing to do all day but to think of the past and to dread the future. One poor prisoner I was told had gone distracted with the terror of this thought. Child, every day that I visited my son, while he talked with me, always cheerful and smiling, my mind turned continually to the scaffold and the gibbet.' Then she returned to the old subject from which she could in no way escape. 'I saw the hangman. I saw my son hanging to the shameful tree—oh! my son! my son!—till I could bear it no longer and would hurry away from the prison and walk about the town over the fields—yea, all night long—to escape the dreadful thought. Oh! to be

blessed with such a son and to have him torn from my arms for such a death ! If he had been killed upon the field of battle 'twould have been easier to bear. But now he dies daily—he dies a thousand deaths in my mind. My child !'—she turned again to the churchyard—'the rooks are cawing in their nests ; the sparrows and the robins hop among the graves ; the dead hear nothing ; all their troubles are over, all their sins are forgiven.'

I comforted her as well as I could. Indeed, I understood not at all what she meant, thinking that perhaps all her trouble had caused her to be in that frame of mind when a woman doth not know whether to laugh or to cry. And then, taking my basket, I sallied forth to provide the day's provisions for my prisoners.

'Barnaby,' I said, when he came to the wicket, 'I have good news for thee.'

'What good news ? That I am to be flogged once a year in every market-town in Somersetshire, as will happen to young Tutchin ?'

‘No, no—not that kind of news. But freedom. Brother, hope for freedom.’

He laughed. ‘Who is to give us freedom?’

‘Benjamin hath found a way for the enlargement of all.’

‘Ben Boscotel? What! will he stir finger for the sake of anybody? Then, Sis, if I remember Ben aright there will be something for himself. But if it is upon Ben that we are to rely we are truly well sped. On Ben, quotha!’

‘My Brother, he told me so himself.’

‘Ware hawks, Sister. If Ben is at one end of the rope and the hangman at the other, I think I know who will be stronger. Well, Child, believe Ben if thou wilt. Thy father looks strange this morning. He opened his eyes and seemed to know me. I wonder if there is a change. ’Tis wonderful how he lasts. There are six men sickened since yesterday of the fever. Three of them brought in last week are already dead. As for the singing that we used to hear, it is all over, and if

the men get drunk they are dumb drunk. Sir Christopher looks but poorly this morning. I hope he will not take the fever. He staggered when he arose, which is a bad sign.'

'Tell mother, Barnaby, what Benjamin hath undertaken to do.'

'Nay, that shall I not, because, look you, I believe it not. There is some trick or lie at the bottom, unless Ben hath repented and changed his disposition, which used to be two parts wolf, one part bear, and the rest fox. If there were anything left it was serpent. Well, Sister, I am no grumbler, but I expect this job to be over in a fortnight or so, when they say the Wells Assizes will be held. Then we shall all be swinging, and I only hope that we may carry with us into the Court such a breath of jail fever as shall lay the Judge himself upon his back and end his days. In the next world he will meet the men whom he has sentenced, and it will fare worse for him in their hands than with fifty thousand devils.'

So he took a drink of the beer, and de-

parted within the prison. And for many months I saw him no more.

On my way home I met Benjamin.

‘Hath Madam told you yet of my conditions?’ he asked eagerly.

‘Not yet; she will doubtless tell me presently. Oh! what matter for the conditions. It can only be something good for us, contrived by your kind heart, Ben. I have told Barnaby, who will not believe in our good fortune.’

‘It is, indeed, something very good for you, Alice, as you will find. Come with me and walk in the meadows beyond the reach of this doleful place, where the air reeks with jail fever and all day long they are reading the Funeral Service.’

So he led me out upon the sloping sides of a hill, where we walked a while upon the grass very pleasantly, my mind being now at rest.

‘You have heard of nothing,’ he said, ‘of late, but of the Rebellion and its consequences. Let us talk about London.’

So he discoursed concerning his own profession and his prospects, which, he said, were better than those of any other young lawyer, in his own opinion. 'For my practice,' he said, 'I already have one which gives me an income far beyond my wants, which are simple. Give me plain fare, and for the evening a bottle or two of good wine, with tobacco, and friends who love a cheerful glass. I ask no more. My course lies clear before me: I shall become a King's Counsel, I shall be made a Judge; presently, I shall become Lord Chancellor. What did I tell thee, Child, long ago? Well, that time has now arrived.'

Still I was so foolish, being so happy, that I could not understand what he meant.

'I am sure, Benjamin,' I said, 'that we at home shall ever rejoice and be proud of your success. Nobody will be more happy to hear of it than Robin and I.'

Here he turned very red and muttered something.

'You find your happiness in courts and

clubs and London,' I went on ; ' as for Robin and myself, we shall find ours in the peaceful place which we have always decided to have.'

' What the Devil ! ' he cried, ' she will not tell you the conditions? She came with me for no other purpose. I have borne with her company all the way from Exeter for this only. Go back to her, and ask what it is! Go back, I say, and make her tell! What! am I to take all this trouble for nothing?'

His face became purple with sudden rage ; his eyes grew swiftly fierce, and he roared and bawled at me. Why, what had I said?

' Benjamin,' I cried, ' what is the matter? How have I angered you?'

' Go back ! ' he roared again. ' Tell her that if I presently come and find thee still in ignorance 'twill be the worse for all! Tell her that *I* say it. 'Twill else be worse for all!'

CHAPTER XXX.

A SLIGHT THING AT THE BEST

O I left Benjamin, much frightened, and marvelling, both at his violent passion and at the message which he sent to Madam.

She was waiting for me at the lodging.

‘Madam,’ I said, ‘I have seen Benjamin. He is very angry. He bade me go home and ask you concerning his conditions. We must not anger our best friend, dear Madam.’

She rose from her chair and began to walk about, wringing her hands as if torn by some violent emotion.

‘Oh! my child,’ she cried; ‘Alice, come to my arms—if it is for the last time—my daughter. More than ever mine, though I must never call thee daughter.’

She held me in her arms, kissing me tenderly. ‘My dear, we agreed that no sacrifice could be too great for the safety of our boy. Yes, we agreed to that. Let us kiss each other before we do a thing after which we can never kiss each other again. No, never again.’

‘Why not again, Madam?’

‘Oh,’ she pushed me from her, ‘it is now eight of the clock, he will be here at ten? I promised I would tell thee before he came! And all is in readiness.’

‘For what, Madam?’

Why, even then I guessed not her meaning, though I might have done so; but I never thought that so great a wickedness was possible!

‘No sacrifice should be too great for us!’ she cried, clasping her head with her hands and looking wildly about. ‘None too great! Not even the sacrifice of my own son’s love—no; not that! Why, let us think of the sacrifices men make for their country, for their religion. Abraham was ready to offer

his son, Isaac ; Jephthah sacrificed his daughter ; King Mesha slew his eldest son for a burnt offering. Thousands of men die every year in battle for their country. What have we to offer? If we give ourselves it is but a slight thing that we offer at the best.'

' Surely, Madam,' I cried, ' you know that we would willingly die for the sake of Robin? '

' Yes, Child ; to die—to die were nothing. It is to live—we must live—for Robin.'

' I understand not, Madam.'

' Listen then—for the time presses, and if he arrives and finds that I have not broken the thing to thee, he will perhaps ride back to Exeter in a rage. When I left my son after the trial, being very wretched and without hope, I found Benjamin waiting for me at the prison gates. He walked with me to my lodging, and on the way he talked of what was in my mind. First, he said, that for the better sort there was little hope, seeing that the King was revengeful and the Judge most wrathful, and in a mood which

allowed of no mercy. Therefore, it would be best to dismiss all hopes of pardon or of safety either to these two or to the prisoners of Ilminster. Now, when he had said this a great many times, we being now arrived at my lodging, he told me that there was, in my case, a way out of the trouble—and one way only: that if we consented to follow that way, which, he said, would do no manner of harm to either of us or to our prisoners, he would undertake and faithfully engage to secure the safety of all our prisoners. I prayed him to point out this way, and, after much entreaty, he consented.'

'What is the way?' I asked, having not the least suspicion. And yet the look in her eyes should have told me what was coming.

'Is it true, Child, that long ago you were betrothed to Benjamin?'

'No, Madam, that is most untrue.'

'He says that when you were quite a little child he informed you of his intention to marry you and none but you.'

'Why, that is true, indeed.' And now I

began to understand the way that was proposed ; and my heart sank within me. ' That is true. But to tell a child such a thing is not a betrothal.'

' He says that only three or four years ago he renewed that assurance.'

' So he did, but I gave him no manner of encouragement.'

' He says that he promised to return and marry you when he had arrived at some practice, and that he engaged to become Lord Chancellor and make you a Peeress of the Realm.'

' All that he said, and more. Yet did I never give him the least encouragement, but quite the contrary, for always have I feared and disliked Benjamin. Never at any time was it possible for me to think of him in that way. That he knows, and cannot pretend otherwise. Madam, doth Benjamin wish evil to Robin because I am betrothed to him?'

' He also says, in his rude way—Benjamin was always a rude and coarse boy—that he had warned you, long ago, that if anyone else

came in his way he would break the head of that man.'

'Yes : I remember, now, that he threatened some violence.'

'My dear'—Madam took my hand—
'his time of revenge is come. He says that he has the life of the man whom you love in his own hands ; and he will, he swears, break his head for him, and so keep the promise made to you by tying the rope round his neck. My dear, Benjamin has always been stubborn and obstinate from his birth. Stubborn and obstinate was he as a boy ; stubborn and obstinate is he now. He cares for nobody in the world except himself ; he has no heart ; he has no tenderness ; he has no scruples ; if he wants a thing, he will trample on all the world to get it, and break all the laws of God. I know what manner of life he leads. He is the friend and companion of the dreadful Judge who goeth about like a raging lion. Every night do they drink together until they are speechless and cannot stand. Their delight it is to

drink, and smoke tobacco, with unseemly jests and ribald songs which would disgrace the playhouse or the country fair. Oh! 'tis the life of a hog that he delights in! Yet, for all that, he is, like his noble friend, full of ambition. Nothing will do but he must rise in the world. Therefore, he works hard at his profession—and '—

‘Madam—the condition!—what is the condition? For Heaven’s sake tell me quickly! Is it—is it!—oh! no—no—no! Anything but that!’

‘My child—my daughter’—she laid her hand upon my head. ‘It is that condition—that, and none other. Oh! my dear, it is laid upon thee to save us!—it is to be thy work alone—and by such a sacrifice as, I think, no woman ever yet had to make! Nay, perhaps it is better not to make it, after all. Let all die together, and let us live out our allotted lives in sorrow. I thought of it all night, and it seemed better so—better even that thou wert lying in thy grave. His condition! Oh! he must be a devil thus to

barter for the lives of his grandfather and his cousins—no human being, surely, would do such a thing : the condition, my dear, is that thou must marry him—now : this very morning—and this once done, he will at once take such steps—I know not what they may be, but I take it that his friend the Judge will grant him the favour—such steps, I say, as will release unto us all our prisoners.’

At first I made no answer.

‘If not,’ she added after a while, ‘they shall all be surely hanged.’

I remained silent. It is not easy at such a moment to collect one’s thoughts and understand what things mean. I asked her presently if there was no other way.

‘None,’ she said : ‘there was no other way.’

‘What shall I do ? What shall I do ?’ I asked. ‘God, it seems, hath granted my daily prayer ; but how ? Oh ! what shall I do ?’

‘Think of what thou hast in thy power.’

‘But to marry him—to marry Benjamin

—oh ! to marry him ! How should I live ? How should I look the world in the face ?’

‘ My dear, there are many other unhappy wives. There are other husbands brutal and selfish ; there are other men as wicked as my nephew. Thou wilt swear in church to love, honour, and obey him. Thy love is already hate ; thy honour is contempt ; thy obedience will be the obedience of a slave. Yet death cometh at length, even to a slave and to the harsh task-master.’

‘ Oh ! Madam, miserable indeed is the lot of those whose only friend is death.’

She was silent, leaving me to think of this terrible condition.

‘ What would Robin say ? What would Humphrey say ? Nay, what would his Honour himself say ?’

‘ Why, Child,’ she replied, with a kind of laugh, ‘ it needs not a wizard to tell what they would say. For one and all, they would rather go to the gallows than buy their lives at such a price. Thy brother Barnaby would mount the ladder with a cheerful heart rather

than sell his sister to buy his life. That we know already. Nay, we know more. For Robin will never forgive his mother who suffered thee to do such a thing. So shall I lose what I value more than life—the love of my only son. Yet would I buy his life at such a price. My dear, if you lose your lover I lose my son. Yet we will save him whether he will or no.’ She took my hands and pressed them in her own. ‘My dear, it will be worse for me than for you. You will have a husband, it is true, whom you will loathe ; yet you will not see him, perhaps, for half the day at least ; and, perhaps, he will leave thee to thyself for the other half. But for me, I shall have to endure the loss of my son’s affections all my life, because I am very sure and certain that he can never forgive me. Think, my dear ! Shall they all die ?—all !—think of father and brother, and of your mother !—or will you willingly endure a life of misery with this man for husband in order that they may live ? ’

‘ Oh, Madam,’ I said, ‘ as for the misery—

any other kind of misery I would willingly endure ; but it is marriage—marriage ! Yet who am I that I should choose my sacrifice ? Oh, if good works were of any avail, then would the way to heaven be opened wide for me by such an act and such a life ! Oh, what will Robin say of me ? What will he think of me ? Will he curse me and loathe me for being able to do this thing ? Should I do it ? Is it right ? Doth God command it ? Yet to save their dear lives—only to set them free—to send that good old man back to his home—to suffer my father to die in peace ! —I must do it—I must do it ! Yet Robin could never forgive me. Oh ! he told me that betrothal was a sacrament. I have sworn to be his. Yet, to save his life, I cannot hesitate. If it is wrong, I pray that Robin will forgive me. Tell him—oh, tell him that it is I who am to die instead of him. Perhaps the Lord will suffer me to die quickly. Tell him that I loved him, and only him ; that I would rather have died ; that for his life alone I would not have done this thing, because he would not

have suffered it. But it is for all—it is for all ! Oh ; he must forgive me ! Some day you will send me a message of forgiveness from him. But I must go away and live in London, far from all of you ; never to see him or any one of you again—not even my own mother. It is too shameful a thing to do. And you will tell his Honour, who hath always loved me and would willingly have called me his granddaughter. It was not that I loved not Robin—God knoweth that ; but for all—for him and Robin and all—to save his grey hairs from the gallows, and to send him back to his home. Oh ! tell him that’——

‘My dear—my dear,’ she replied, but could say no more.

Then for a while we sat in silence, with beating hearts.

‘I am to purchase the lives of five honest men,’ I said presently, ‘by my own dishonour. I know very well that it is by my dishonour and my sin that their lives are to be bought. It doth not save me from dishonour that I am first to stand in the church and be married

according to the Prayer Book. Nay, does it not make the sin greater and the dishonour more certain that I shall first swear what I cannot ever perform—to love and honour that man ?’

‘ Yes, girl—yes !’ said Madam. ‘ But the sin is mine more than yours. Oh ! let me bear the sin upon myself.’

‘ You cannot, it is my sin and my dishonour ; nay, it is a most dreadful wicked thing that I am to do. It is all the sins in one : I do not honour my parents in thus dishonouring myself ; I kill myself—the woman that my Robin loved ; I steal the outward form which belonged to Robin and give it to another ; I live in a kind of adultery. It is truly a terrible sin in the sight of Heaven. Yet I will do it !—I must do it ! I love him so that I cannot let him die ; rather let me be overwhelmed with shame and reproach if only he can live !’

‘ Said I not, my dear, that we two could never kiss each other again ? When two men have conspired together to commit a

crime they consort no more together, it is said, but go apart and loathe each other. So it is now with us.'

So I promised to do this thing. The temptation was beyond my strength. Yet had I possessed more faith I should have refused. And then great, indeed, would have been my reward. Alas ! how was I punished for my want of faith ! Well, it was to save my lover. Love makes us strong for evil as well as strong for good.

And all the time, to think that we never inquired or proved his promises ! To think that we never thought of doubting or of asking how he, a young barrister, should be able to save the lives of four active rebels, and one who had been zealous in the cause ! That two women should have been so simple is now astonishing.

When the clock struck ten I saw Benjamin walking across the churchyard. It was part of the brutal nature of the man that he should walk upon the graves, even those

newly-made and not covered up with turf. He swung his great burly form, and looked up at the window with a grin which made Madam tremble and shrink back. But for me, I was not moved by the sight of him, for now I was strong in resolution. Suppose one who hath made up her mind to go to the stake for her religion, as would doubtless have happened unto many had King James been allowed to continue in his course, do you think that such a woman would begin to tremble at the sight of her executioner? Not so. She would arise and go forth to meet him, with pale face, perhaps (because the agony is sharp) but with a steady eye. Benjamin opened the door, and stood looking from one to the other.

‘Well,’ he said to Madam, roughly, ‘you have by this time told her the condition?’

‘I have told her—alas! I have told her, and already I repent me that I have told her.’

‘Doth she consent?’

‘She does. It shall be as you desire.’

‘Ha!’ Benjamin drew a long breath.

‘ Said I not, Sweetheart ’—he turned to me—
‘ that I would break the head of any who came
between us ? What ? Have I not broken
the head of my cousin when I take away his
girl ? Very well, then. And that to good
purpose. Very well, then. It remains to
carry out the condition.’

‘ The condition,’ I said, ‘ I understand to
be this. If I become your wife, Benjamin,
you knowing full well that I love another
man and am already promised to him ’——

‘ Ta—ta—ta ! ’ he said. ‘ That you are
promised to another man matters not one
straw. That you love another man I care
nothing. What ! I promise, Sweetheart, that
I will soon make thee forget that other man.
And as for loving any other man after marry-
ing me, that, d’ye see, my pretty, will be
impossible. Oh ! thou shalt be the fondest
wife in the Three Kingdoms.’

‘ Nay ; if such a thing cannot move your
heart, I say no more. If I marry you, then
all our prisoners will be enlarged ? ’

‘ I swear ’—he used a great round oath,

very horrid from the lips of a Christian man — ‘I swear that, if you marry me, the three — Robin, Humphrey, and Barnaby — shall all save their lives. And as for Sir Christopher and thy father, they also shall be enlarged. Can I say aught in addition ?’

I suspected no deceit. I understood, and so did Madam, that this promise meant the full and free forgiveness of all. Yet there was something of mockery in his eyes, which should have made us suspicious. But I, for one, was young and ignorant, and Madam was country-bred and truthful.

‘Benjamin,’ I cried, falling on my knees before him, ‘think what it is you ask! Think what a wicked thing you would have me do! — to break my vows, who am promised to your cousin! And would you leave your grandfather to perish all for a whim about a silly girl? Benjamin, you are playing with us. You cannot — you could not sell the lives — the very lives of your grandfather, and your cousins for such a price as this! The play has gone far enough, Benjamin. Tell us

that it is over, and that you never meant to be taken seriously, and we will forgive you the anguish you have caused us.'

'Get up,' he said. 'get up, I say, and stop this folly.' He then began to curse and to swear. 'Playing, is it? You shall quickly discover that it is no play, but serious enough to please you all, Puritans though you be. Playing! Get up, I say, and have done.'

'Then,' I said, 'there is not in the whole world a more inhuman monster than yourself.'

'Oh! my dear—my dear, do not anger him!' cried Madam.

'All is fair in love, my pretty,' said Benjamin with a grin. 'Before marriage call me what you please—inhuman monster—anything that you please. After marriage, my wife will have to sing a different tune.'

'Oh! Benjamin, treat her kindly,' Madam cried.

'I mean not otherwise. Kindness is my nature. I am too kind for my own interests. Obedience I expect, and good temper and a

civil tongue, with such respect as is due to one who intends to be Lord Chancellor. Come, Child, no more hard words. Thou shalt be the happiest woman, I say, in the world. What? Monmouth's rebellion was only contrived to make thy happiness. Instead of a dull country-house thou shalt have a house in London; instead of the meadows, thou shalt have the parks; instead of skylarks, the singers at the playhouse; in due course thou shalt be My Lady'——

‘Oh! stop—stop; I must marry you since you make me, but the partner in your ambitions will I never be.’

‘My dear,’ Madam whispered, ‘speak him fair. Be humble to him. Remember he holds in his hands the lives of all.’

‘Yes,’ Benjamin overheard her. ‘The lives of all. The man who dares to take my girl from me—mine—deserves to die. Yet so clement, so forgiving, so generous am I, that I am ready to pardon him. He shall actually save his life. If, therefore, it is true that (before marriage) you love that man and are

promised to him, come to church with me, out of your great love to him, in order to save his life ; but if you love him not, then you can love me, and, therefore, can come to please yourself, willy-nilly. What! am I to be thwarted in such a trifle? Willy-nilly, I say, I will marry thee. Come—we waste the time.'

He seized my wrist as if he would have dragged me towards the door.

'Benjamin,' cried Madam, 'be merciful! she is but a girl, and she loves my poor boy—be merciful! Oh! it is not yet too late.' She snatched me from his grasp and stood between us, her arms outstretched. 'It is not too late; they may die and we will go in sorrow, but not in shame. They may die. Go! murderer of thy kith and kin. Go, send thy grandfather to die upon the scaffold; but, at least, leave us in peace.'

'No, Madam,' I said. 'With your permission, if there be no other way, I will save their lives.'

'Well, then,' Benjamin said sulkily, 'there

must be an end of this talk and no further delay; else, by the Lord! I know not what may happen. Will Tom Boilman delay to prepare his cauldron of hot pitch? If we wait much longer, Robin's arms and legs will be seething in that broth! Doth the Judge delay with his warrant? Already he signs it—already they are putting up the gibbet on which he will hang! Come! I say.'

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Benjamin was sure of his prey, I suppose, because we found the clergyman waiting for us in the church, ready with surplice and book. The clerk was standing beside him, also with his book, open at the Service for Marriage. While they read the Service Madam threw herself prostrate on the Communion steps, her head in her hands, as one who suffers the last extremities of remorse and despair for sin too grievous to be ever forgiven. Let us hope that sometimes we may judge ourselves more harshly than Heaven itself doth judge us.

The clerk gave me away, and was the only

witness of the marriage besides that poor distracted mother.

'Twas a strange wedding. There had been no banns put up ; the bride was pale and trembling ; the bridegroom was gloomy ; the only other person present wept upon her knees while the parson read through his ordered prayer and psalm and exhortation ; there was no sign of rejoicing.

'So,' said Benjamin, when all was over. 'Now, thou art my wife. They shall not be hanged therefor. Come, wife, we will this day ride to Exeter, where thou shalt thyself bear the joyful news of thy marriage and their safety to my cousins. They will own that I am a loving and a careful cousin.'

He led me, thus talking, out of church. Now, as we left the churchyard, there passed through the gates—oh ! baleful omen !—four men carrying between them a bier. Upon it was the body of another poor prisoner, dead of jail fever. I think that even the hard heart of Benjamin—now my husband !—oh ! merciful Heavens ! he was my husband !—

quailed, and was touched with fear at meeting this most sure and certain sign of coming woe, for he muttered something in his teeth, and cursed the bearers aloud for not choosing another time.

My husband, then—I must needs call him my husband—told me, brutally, that I must ride with him to Exeter, where I should myself bear the joyful news of their safety to his cousins. I did not take that journey, nor did I bear the news, nor did I ever after that moment set eyes upon him again, nor did I ever speak to him again. His wife I remained, I suppose, because I was joined to him in church. But I never saw him after that morning. And the reason why you shall now hear.

At the door of our lodging, which was, you know, hard by the church, stood Mr. Boscorel himself.

‘What means this?’ he asked, with looks troubled and confused. ‘What doth it mean, Benjamin? What hath happened, in the name of God?’

‘Sir,’ said Benjamin. ‘You know my character. You will acknowledge that I am not one of those who are easily turned from their purpose. Truly, the occasion is not favourable for a wedding, but yet I present to you my newly-married wife.’

‘*Thy* wife ! Child, *he* thy husband ? Why, thou art betrothed to Robin ! Hath the world gone crazy ? Do I hear aright ? Is this—this—this—a time to be marrying ? Hast thou not heard ? Hast thou not heard, I say ?’

‘Brother-in-law,’ said Madam. ‘It is to save the lives of all that this is done.’

‘“To save the lives of all ?”’ Mr. Boscorel repeated. ‘Why—why—hath not Benjamin, then, told what hath happened, and what hath been done ?’

‘No, Sir, I have not,’ said his son. ‘I had other fish to fry.’

‘Not told them ? Is it possible ?’

‘Benjamin hath promised to save all their lives if this child would marry him. To save their lives hath Alice consented, and I with

her. He will save them through his great friendship with Judge Jeffreys.'

'Benjamin to save their lives? Sirrah'—he turned to his son with great wrath in his face—'what villainy is this? Thou hast promised to save their lives? What villainy, I say, is this? Sister-in-law, did he not tell you what hath been done?'

'He has told us nothing. Oh! is there new misery?'

'Child'—Mr. Boscorel spoke with the tears running down his cheeks—'thou art betrayed—alas! most cruelly and foully betrayed. My son—would to God that I had died before I should say so—is a villain! For, first, the lives of these young men are already saved, and he hath known it for a week and more. Learn, then, that, with the help of certain friends, I have used such interests at Court that for these three I have received the promise of safety. Yet they will not be pardoned. They are given, among other prisoners, to the courtiers and the ladies-in-waiting. One Mr. Jerome Nipho hath re-

ceived and entered on his list the names of Robin and Humphrey Challis and Barnaby Eykin ; they will be sold by him, and transported to Jamaica or elsewhere for a term of years.'

'They were already saved !' cried Madam. 'He knew, then, when they were tried and sentenced, that their lives were already spared. Oh ! child ! poor child ! Oh ! Alice ! Oh ! my daughter !—what misery have we brought upon thee !'

Benjamin said nothing. On his face lay a scowl of obstinacy. As for me, I was clinging to Madam's arm. This man was my husband—and Robin was already saved—and by lies and villainy he had cheated us !

'They were already saved,' Mr. Boscorel continued. 'Benjamin knew it—I sent him a letter, that he might tell his cousins. My son—alas !—I say again, my only son—my only son—my son is a villain !'

'No one shall take my girl,' said Benjamin sullenly. 'What ? All is fair in love.'

'He has not told you, either, what hath

happened in the prison ? Thou hadst speech, I hear, with Barnaby, early this morning, Child. The other prisoners'—he lowered his voice and folded his hands, as in prayer—'they have since been enlarged.'

'How ?' Madam asked. 'Is Sir Christopher free ?'

'He hath received his freedom—from One who never fails to set poor prisoners free. My father-in-law fell dead in the courtyard at nine o'clock this morning—weep not for him. But, child, there is much more ; about that same time thy father breathed his last. He, too, is dead ; he, too, hath his freedom. Benjamin knew of this as well, Alice, my child'—the kindly tears of compassion rolled down his face. 'I have loved thee always, my dear ; and it is my son who hath wrought this wickedness—my own son—my only son'——he shook his cane in Benjamin's face. 'Oh ! villain,' he cried ; 'Oh ! villain !'

Benjamin made no reply ; but his face was black and his eyes obstinate.

'There is yet more--oh ! there is more.

Alas ! my child, there is more. Thou hast lost thy mother as well. For at the sight of her husband's death, his poor, patient wife could no longer bear the trouble, but she, too, fell dead—of a broken heart ; yea, she fell dead upon his dead body—the Lord showed her this great and crowning mercy—so that they all died together. This, too, Benjamin knew. Oh ! villain ! villain !'

Benjamin heard unmoved, except that his scowl grew blacker.

'Go,' his father continued, 'I load thee not, my son, with a father's curse. Thy wickedness is so great that thy punishment will be exemplary. The judgments of God descend upon the most hardened. Get thee gone out of my sight. Let me never more behold thee until thou hast felt the intolerable pangs of remorse. Get thee hence, I say ! begone !'

'I go not,' said Benjamin, 'without my loving wife. I budge not, I say, without my tender and loving wife. Come, my dear.'

He advanced with outstretched hands,

but I broke away and fled shrieking. As I ran, Mr. Boscorel stood before his son and barred the way, raising his right hand.

‘ Back, boy ! Back ! ’ he said, solemnly.
‘ Back, I say ! Before thou reachest thy most unhappy wife, first shalt thou pass over thy father’s body ! ’

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE VISION OF CONSOLATION.



I RAN so fast, being then young and strong, that Benjamin, I am sure, could not have overtaken me had he

tried, because he was already gross of body and short of breath in consequence of his tippling. I

have since heard that he did not follow me, nor did he dare to push aside his father. But he laughed and said, 'Let her run ; let her run. I

warrant I shall find her and bring her back ;' thinking, I suppose, that I had run from him

as a girl in play runs from her companions. I ran also so long, fear lending me strength, that the sun was getting even into the afternoon before I ventured to stop. I looked round from time to time, but saw no one following me. I do not remember by what road, track, or path I went: pasture fields and plantations I remember; twice I crossed a stream on stepping-stones; once I saw before me a village with a church tower; but this I avoided for fear of the people. When I ventured to stop, I was in a truly wild and desolate country—our county of Somerset hath in it many such wild places, given over to forests, fern, and heather. Presently I remembered the place, though one forest is much like another, and I knew that I had been in this part before, on that day when we rode from Lyme to Taunton, and again on the day when we walked prisoners with the soldiers to Ilminster. I was on the Black Down Hills again.

When, therefore, I understood where I was, I began to recover a little from the first

horror which had driven me to fly like one possessed of an evil spirit ; and seeing that no one was in pursuit, I began to collect my senses and to ask myself whither I was going, and what I should do. I was then near that ancient inclosure called Castle Ratch, from whose walls one looks down upon the broad vale of Taunton Dean. In the distance, I thought I could discern the great tower of St. Mary's Church : but perhaps that was only my imagination. I sat down, therefore, upon the turf under these ancient walls, and set myself to consider my condition, which was indeed forlorn.

First, I had no friends or protectors left in the whole world, because after what I had done I could never look upon Robin or even Humphrey again ; nor could I importune Madam, because she would not anger her son (I represented him in my mind as most unforgiving) ; nor could I seek the help of Mr. Boscorel, because that might help his son to find me out, and everybody knows that a husband may command the obedience of his

wife. And Sir Christopher was dead, and my father was dead, and my mother was dead, and I could not even weep beside their coffins or follow their bodies to the grave. A woman without friends in this world is like unto a traveller in a sandy desert without a bottle of water.

Yet was I so far better than some of these poor friendless creatures, because I had, concealed upon me, a bag containing all the money which Barnaby had given me—two hundred and fifty gold pieces—save a little which we had expended at Taunton and Ilminster. This is a great sum, and by its help I could, I thought with satisfaction, live for a long time, perhaps all my life, if I could find some safe retreat among godly people.

No friends? Why, there was Susan Blake of Taunton—she who walked with the Maids when they gave Monmouth the Bible, the sword, and the flags. I resolved that I would go to her and tell her all that had happened. Out of her kindness she would take me in and help me to find some safe

hiding-place and perhaps some honest way of living, so as to save his money against Barnaby's return from the Plantations.

Then I thought I would find out the valley where we had lived for a fortnight, and rest for one night in the hut, and in the early morning before daybreak walk down the comb and so into Taunton while as yet the town was still sleeping. And this I did. It was very easy to find the head of the comb and the source of the stream, where we had made our encampment. Close by, beneath the trees, was Barnaby's hut : no one had been there to disturb or destroy it ; but the leaves upon the boughs which formed its sides were now dead. Within it the fern and the heath which had formed my bed were still dry. Outside, the pot hung over the black embers of our last fire ; and, to my great joy, in the basket which had contained our provisions I found a large crust of bread. It was, to be sure, dry and hard ; but I dipped it in the running water of the stream and made my supper with it. For dessert I had blackberries, which were by this

time ripe, and are nowhere bigger or sweeter than on Black Down. There were also filberts and nuts, now ripe, of which I gathered a quantity, so that I had breakfast provided for me, as well as supper.

When I had done this, I was so tired and my head was so giddy with the terror of the day, that I lay down upon the fern in the hut and there fell fast asleep and so continued until far into the night.

Now, in my sleep a strange thing happened unto me. For my own part, I account it nothing less than a Vision granted unto me by mercy and special grace of Heaven. Those who read of it may call it what they please. It was in this wise. There appeared before my sleeping eyes (but they seemed wide open), as it were, a broad and open campaign; presently there came running across the plain in great terror, shrieking and holding her hands aloft, a girl, whose face at first I could not see. She ran in this haste and terrible anguish of fear because there followed after her a troop of dogs, barking and yelping. Behind the

dogs rode on horseback one whose face I saw not any more than that of the girl. He cursed and swore (I knew the voice, but could not tell, being in a dream, to whom it belonged), and cracked a horrid whip and encouraged the dogs, lashing the laggards. In his eyes (though his face was in some kind of shadow) there was such a look as I remembered in Benjamin's when he put the ring upon my finger—a look of resolute and hungry wickedness, which made me tremble and shake.

Now, as I looked, the dogs still gained upon her who ran, and yelped as if in a few moments they would spring upon her and tear her flesh from her bones. Then suddenly, between her who ran and those who pursued, there arose an awful form. He was clad in white and in his hand he bore a sword, and he turned upon that hunter a face filled with wrath. Lightnings shot from his eyes and a cloud of thunder lay upon his brow. At the sight of that face the dogs stopped in their running, cowered, and fell dead. And at the dreadful aspect of that face the hunter's horse

fell headlong, and his rider, falling also with a shriek of terror, broke his neck, and so lay prostrate and dead. Then this dreadful minister of God's wrath turned from him to the flying figure, and lo ! his face was now transformed ; his eyes became soft and full of love ; he smiled graciously ; a crown of glory was upon his head ; white robes flowed downward to his feet ; his fiery sword was a palm branch : he was the Angel of Consolation. ' Have no more fear,' he said, ' though the waves of the sea rise up against thee and the winds threaten to drown thee in the deep. Among the ungodly and the violent thou shalt be safe ; in all times of peril the Lord will uphold thee ; earthly joy shall be thine. Be steadfast unto the end.'

And then I looked again, those blessed words ringing in my ears ; and behold ! I saw then, which I had not seen before, that the flying figure was none other than myself ; that he who cruelly hunted after with the dogs and the whip was none other than my husband ; and that the Angel of Wrath, who became the

Angel of Consolation, was none other than my father himself! But he was glorified! Oh! the face was his face—that, anyone could see; but it was changed into something—I know not what—so far brighter and sweeter than the earthly face, that I marvelled! Then the Vision disappeared, and I awoke.

So bright and clear had it been that I seemed to see it still, though I was sitting up with my eyes open, and it was night. Then it slowly vanished. Henceforth, however, I was assured of two things; first, that no harm would happen unto me, but that I should be protected from the malice of my enemies, whatever they might design (indeed, I had but one enemy—to wit, the man who had that morning sworn to love and cherish me); and next, that I had seen with mortal eyes what, indeed, hath been vouchsafed to few, the actual spiritual body—the glorified body, like to the earthly, but changed—with which the souls of the Elect are clothed.

So I arose now without the least fear. It was night; but in the East there showed the

first grey of the dawn, and the birds were already beginning to twitter as if they were dreaming of the day. The wind was fresh, and I was lightly clad, but the splendour of the Vision made me forget the cold. Oh! I had received a Voice from heaven! How could I henceforth fear anything? Nay, there was no room even for grief, though those terrible things had fallen upon me, and I was now alone and friendless, and the world is full of ungodly men.

It must have been about half-past four in the morning. It grew light quickly, so that not only the trees became visible, but the black depths between them changed into glades and underwood, and I could see my way down the comb beside the stream. Then, without waiting for the sun to rise (which he presently did in great warmth and splendour), I started, hoping to get into Taunton before the people were up and the streets became crowded. But I did not know the distance, which must have been seven miles at least, because it was nearly eight o'clock when I reached the town, having

followed the course of the stream through three villages, which I have since learned must have been those of Pitminster, Troll, and Wilton.

It was market day, and the streets were full of country people—some of them farmers with bags of corn in their hands, going to the corn-market, and some with carts full of fresh fruit and other things. Their faces were heavy and sad, and they talked in whispers as if they were afraid. They had, indeed, good cause for fear; for the prison held over five hundred unfortunate men waiting for their trial, and the terrible Judge was already on his way with his carts filled with more prisoners rumbling after him. Already Colonel Kirke had caused I know not how many to be hanged, and the reports of what had been done at Dorchester and Exeter sufficiently prepared the minds of the wretched prisoners at Taunton for what was about to be done there. Among them was the unfortunate Captain Hucker, the Sergeant-Maker, who had looked for a Peerage, and was now to receive a halter. There was also among

them that poor man, Mr. Simon Hamlyn, who was hanged only for riding into Taunton in order to dissuade his son from joining Monmouth. This the Mayor of Taunton pointed out to the bloodthirsty Judge ; but in vain. The whole five hundred prisoners were, in the end, sentenced to death ; and one hundred and forty-five actually suffered, to the great indignation of those who looked on, even of the King's party. Nay, at one of the executions, when nineteen were hanged at the same time, and a great fire was made so that the sufferers might actually see before their death the fire that was to burn their bowels, the very soldiers wept, saying that it was so sad a thing they scarce knew how to bear it. Three years later, the hard heart of the King met with its proper punishment.

The soldiers were among the crowd, some leaning against bulkheads, some drinking at the ale-houses, some haggling for the fruit ; some were also exercising upon Castle Green. They looked good-natured, and showed in their faces none of the cruelty and rage which



'As I passed through the crowd, one caught me by the arm.'

belonged to their officers. But what a doleful change from the time when Monmouth's soldiers filled the town, and all hearts were full of joy, and every face shone with happiness! What a change, indeed!

As I passed among the crowd, one caught me by the arm. It was a little old woman, her face all wrinkled and puckered. She was sitting on a stool beside a great basketful of apples and plums, and a short pipe of tobacco within her lips.

'Mistress,' she whispered, taking the pipe from her mouth. 'Thou wert with the Maids the day of the Flags: I remember thy pretty face. What dost thou here abroad among the people? The air of Taunton town is unwholesome! There may be others who will remember thee as well as I. Take an old woman's advice, and get thee gone. How fares it with thy father, the worthy Dr. Eykin?'

'Alas!' I said, 'he died in Ilminster Jail.'

'Tis pity. But he was old and pious: he hath gone to glory. Whither will those poor lads in the Clink go when they are hanged?

Get thee gone, get thee gone! The air is already foul with dead men's bodies: they tell strange stories of what hath been done by women for the safety of their brothers. Get thee gone, pretty maid, lest something worse than prison happen to thee. And Judge Jeffreys is coming hither like the Devil, having much wrath.'

I could not tell her that nothing would happen to me, because I was protected by a Heavenly Guard.

'I was in the town forty years ago,' the old woman went on, 'when Blake defended it, and we were wellnigh starved. But never have I seen such things as have been done here since the Duke was routed. Get thee gone!—haste away, as from the mouth of Hell!—get thee gone, poor child!'

So I left her, and went on my way, hanging my head, in hopes that no one else would recognise me. Fortunately, no one did, though I saw many faces which I had seen in the town before. They were then tossing their caps and shouting for Monmouth, but were now gloomily whispering, as if every

man feared that his own turn would come next. Over the great gateway of the Castle was stuck up a high row of heads, arms, and legs of rebels blackened with pitch—a horrid sight. Unto this end had come those brave fellows who went forth to dethrone the King. No one noticed or accosted me, and I arrived safely at Susan's house. The door seemed shut, but when I pushed I found that it was open—the lock having been broken from its fastening. Barnaby did that, I remembered. I went in, shutting it after me. No doubt Susan was with her children in the school-room. Strange that she should not repair her lock, and that at a time when the town was full of soldiers, who always carry with them their riotous and lawless followers. 'Twas unlike her orderly housekeeping.

There was no one in the back parlour, where Susan commonly took her meals and conducted the morning and evening prayers. The dishes were on the table, as if of last night's supper or yesterday's dinner. This was, also, unlike a tidy housewife. I opened

the door of the front parlour. Though it was already past the hour for school, there were no children in the room ; the lesson-books and copying-books and slates lay about the floor. What did this untidy litter mean ? Then I went up-stairs and into the bed-rooms, of which there were three—namely, two on the floor above, and one a garret. No one was in them, and the beds had not been made. There remained only the kitchen. No one was there. The house was quite empty ; I observed also that the garden, which was wont to be kept with the greatest neatness, now looked neglected : the ripe plums were dropping from the branches trained upon the wall ; the apples lay upon the grass ; the flower-beds were cumbered with weeds ; grass grew in the walks ; the lawn, which had been so neat and trim, was covered with long grass.

What had happened ? Where was Susan ? Then I seemed to hear her voice above thanking God for the victory, as she had done when Barnaby burst in upon us ; and methought I

heard her singing a hymn with the children, as she had done while we all sat embroidering the Flags. Oh ! the pretty Flags ! And oh ! the pretty sight of the innocents in white and blue carrying those Flags ! The house was filled with the sounds of bygone happiness. Had I stayed another moment I am certain that I should have seen the ghosts of those who filled the rooms in the happy days when the army was in the town. But I did not stay. Not knowing what to do or whither to fly, I ran quickly out of the house, thinking only to get away from the mournful silence of the empty and deserted rooms. Then, as I stepped into the street, I met, face to face, none other than Mr. George Penne, the kind-hearted gentleman who had compassionated the prisoners at Ilminster.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE MAN OF SAMARIA.

‘**T**IS no other than the Fair Maid of Ilminster!’ said Mr. Penne, with surprise. ‘Madam, with submission, is it safe—is it prudent—for one who walked with the Maids of Taunton on a certain memorable day, to venture openly into the streets of this city at such a time? Judge Jeffreys doth approach to hold his Court. Thy friends are in prison or in hiding. The Maids are scattered all.’

‘I sought shelter,’ I said, ‘at the house of Susan Blake, the schoolmistress.’

‘How? You have not heard then? Miss Susan Blake is dead.’

‘She is dead?’

‘She died in Dorchester Jail, whither she

was sent, being specially exempted from any pardon. 'Twas fever carried her off. She is dead. Alas ! the waste of good lives ! She might have bought her freedom after a while, and then—but—well, 'tis useless to lament these mishaps.'

'Alas ! alas !' I cried, wringing my hands. 'Then am I in evil plight, indeed ! All, all are dead !—all my friends are dead !'

'Madam,' he replied very kindly, 'not all your friends, if I may say so. I have, I assure you, a most compassionate heart. I bleed for the sufferings of others ; I cannot rest until I have brought relief. This is my way. Oh ! I take not credit to myself therefor. It is that I am so constituted ; I am not proud or uplifted on this account. Only tell me your case, entrust your safety to me. You may do so safely, if you reflect for one moment, because—see—one word from me and you would be taken to prison by yon worthy clergyman, who is none other than the Rev. Mr. Walter Harte, the Vicar of Taunton. No one is more active against the

rebels, and he would rejoice in committing thee on the charge of having been among the Maids. A word from me would, I say, cause you to be hauled to jail ; but, observe, I do not speak that word—God forbid that I should speak that word !’

‘ Oh, Sir !’ I said, ‘ this goodness overwhelms me.’

‘ Then, Madam, for greater privacy, let us go back into the house and converse there.’

So we went back into the empty house and sat in the back parlour.

‘ As for the nature of your trouble, Madam,’ he began, ‘ I hope you have no dear brothers or cousins among those poor fellows in Taunton Jail.’

‘ No, Sir ; my only brother is at Ilminster, and my cousins are far away in New England.’

‘ That is well. One who, like myself, is of a compassionate disposition, cannot but bewail the grievous waste in jail fever, small-pox, scarlet fever, or putrid throat (to say nothing of the hangings) which now daily

happens in the prison. What doth it avail to hang and quarter a man, when he might be usefully set to work upon his Majesty's Plantations? It is a most sinful and foolish waste, I say'—he spoke with great sincerity and warmth—'and a robbing of the pockets of honest merchants.'

'Indeed, Sir,' I said, 'your words prove the goodness of your heart.'

'Let my deeds, rather than my words, prove that. How fare the prisoners with whom you are most concerned?'

'Alas! Sir Christopher is dead; and my father hath also died of his wound.'

'So?—indeed? More waste! They are dead. More waste! But one was old: had Sir Christopher been sent to the Plantations, his value would have been but small, though, indeed, a ransom—but he is dead; and your father, being wounded—but they are dead, and so no more need be said. There are, however, others, if I remember aright?'

'There is my brother, in Ilminster Prison, and'——

‘Yes ; the two young gentlemen—Challis is their name—in Exeter. I have seen them and conversed with them. Strong young men, especially one of them. ’Tis sad, indeed, to think that they may be cut off in the very bloom of their age when they would command so high a price in Jamaica or Barbadoes. I ventured to beg before their trial that they would immediately begin to use whatever interest they might be able to command in order to get their sentence (which was certain) commuted. Many will be suffered to go abroad—why not these young gentlemen ? But they have no interest, they assured me ; and therefore I fear that they will die. ’Tis most sad. They cannot hang all—that is quite true ; but then these young gentlemen were officers in the army, and therefore an example will be made of them if they have no interest at Court.’

‘Well, Sir,’ I told him, pleased to find him of such a kindly and thoughtful disposition, ‘you will be glad to hear that they are already pardoned, and have been

presented by the King to a gentleman at Court.'

'Aha! Sayest thou so?' His eyes glittered, and he rubbed his hands. 'This is, indeed, joyful news. One of them, Mr. Robin Challis, is a goodly lad, like to whom there are few sent out to the Plantations. He will certainly fetch a good price. The other, Mr. Humphrey, who is somewhat crooked, will go for less. Who hath obtained the gift of these young gentlemen?'

'It is a person named Mr. Nipho.'

'Mr. Jerome Nipho. I know him well. He is a good Catholic—I mean a Papist—and is much about the Court. He is lucky in having had many prisoners given to him. And now, Madam, I hope you will command my services.'

'In what way, Sir?'

'In this way. I am, as I have told you'—here he wagged his head and winked both his eyes, and laughed pleasantly—'one of those foolish busybodies who love to be still doing good to their fellow-creatures. To do

good is my whole delight. Unfortunately the opportunities are rare of conferring exemplary benefit upon my fellow-men. But here the way seems clear.'

He rubbed his hands and laughed again repeating that the way was clear before him, so that I believed myself fortunate in falling in with so virtuous a person.

'Oh, Sir,' I cried, 'would that the whole world would so live and so act !'

'Truly if it did, we should have the prisons cleared. There should be no more throwing away of good lives in hanging ; no more waste of stout fellows and lusty wenches by fever and small-pox. All should go to the Plantations—all. Now, Madam, to our business, which is the advantage of these young gentlemen. Know, therefore, that Mr. Jerome Nipho, with all those who have received presents of prisoners, straightway sells them to persons who engage to transport them across the seas to his Majesty's Plantations in Jamaica, Virginia, or elsewhere. There they are bound to work for a certain term of years.

Call it not work, however,' he added quickly ; ' say rather that they are invited every day to exercise themselves in the cotton and the sugar fields. The climate is delightful ; the sky is seldom clouded ; there are never any frosts or snows ; it is always summer ; the fruits are delicious ; they have a kind of spirit distilled from the sugar canes which is said to be finer and more wholesome than the best Nantz ; the food is palatable and plentiful, though plain. The masters or employers (call them rather friends) are gentlemen of the highest humanity, and the society is composed of sober merchants, wealthy planters, and gentlemen, like your brother, who have had the misfortune to differ in opinions from the Government.'

' Why, Sir,' I said, ' I have always understood that the transported prisoners are treated with the greatest inhumanity : forced to work in heat such as we never experience, driven with the lash, and half-starved, so that none ever come back.'

He shook his head gently. ' See now,' he

said, 'how prejudices arise. Who could have thought that the Plantations should be thus regarded? 'Tis true that there are estates cultivated by convicts of another kind—I mean robbers, highwaymen, petty thieves, and the like. Bristol doth every year send away a shipload at least of such. Nay, 'tis reported that rather than hang murderers and the like the Bristol merchants buy them of the magistrates; but this is out of the kindness of their hearts. Madam,' he thrust his hand into his bosom and looked me in the face, 'I myself am sometimes engaged in that trade. I myself buy these unhappy prisoners and send them to estates where I know they will be treated with the greatest kindness. Do I look like a dishonest man, Madam? As for my name, it is George Penne, and I am known to every man of credit in Bristol. Do I talk like one who would make money out of his neighbours' sufferings? Nay, if that is so, let us part at once and say no more. Madam, your humble servant—no harm is done: your humble servant, Madam.' He put his hat under his arm,

and made as if he would go ; but I begged him to remain, and to advise me further in the matter.

Then I asked him if transported persons ever came home again.

‘ Surely,’ he replied, ‘ some of them come home laden with gold. Some, possessed of places both of honour and of profit, who return to visit their friends, and then go back to the new country. It is a very Eldorado, or land of gold, to those who are willing to work ; and for those who have money and choose to buy exemption from work, it is only an agreeable residence in cheerful society for a certain term of years. Have you, by chance, Madam, any friends who can influence Mr. Jerome Nipho ? ’

‘ No, Sir, I have none.’

‘ Then will I myself communicate with that gentleman. Understand, Madam, that I shall have to pay him so much a head for every prisoner ; that I shall be engaged to place every man on board ship ; that the prisoners will then be taken across the seas

and again sold. But in the case of those who have money, a ransom can be procured, by means of which they will not have to work.'

So far he had spoken in the belief that I was at Taunton on my brother's business, or that of my friends. I told him, therefore, that certain events had occurred which would prevent me from seeing the prisoners at Exeter. And because I could not forbear from weeping while I spoke, he very earnestly begged me to inform him fully in every particular as to my history, adding that his benevolence was not confined to the unhappy case of prisoners, but that it was ready to be extended in any other direction that happy chance might offer.

Therefore, being, as you have seen, so friendless and so ignorant, and so fearful of falling into my husband's hands, and at the same time so grateful to this good man for his kindly offers (indeed, I took him for an instrument provided by Heaven for the safety promised in my vision of the night) that I told him everything exactly, concealing nothing. Nay, I even told him of the bag of

gold which I had tied round my waist—a thing which I had hitherto concealed, because the money was not mine, but Barnaby's. But I told it to Mr. Penne.

While I related my history he interrupted me by frequent ejaculations, showing his abhorrence of the wickedness with which Benjamin compassed his design, and when I finished, he held up his hands in amazement.

'Good God!' he cried; 'that such a wretch should live! That he should be allowed still to cumber the earth! What punishment were fitting for this devil in the shape of a man? Madam, your case is, indeed, one that would move the heart of Nero himself. What is to be done?'

'Nay, that I know not. For if I go back to our village he will find me there; and if I find out some hiding-place he will seek me out and find me; I shall never know rest or peace again. For of one thing am I resolved—I will die—yea, I will indeed die—before I will become his wife more than I am at present.'

'I cannot but commend that resolution,

Madam. But, to be plain with you, there is no place in the world more unsafe for you than Taunton at this time. Therefore, if you please, I will ride with you to Bristol without delay.'

'Sir, I cannot ask this sacrifice of your business.'

'My business lies at Bristol. I can do no more here until Judge Jeffreys hath got through his hangings, of which I fear there may be many, and so more sinful waste of good convicts. Let us, therefore, hasten away as quickly as may be ; as for what shall be done afterwards, that we will consider on the way.'

Did ever a woman in misfortune meet with so good a man ? The Samaritan himself was not of better heart.

Well, to be brief, half an hour afterwards we mounted and rode to Bristol, by way of Bridgwater (this town was even more melancholy than Taunton), taking three days ; the weather being now wet and rainy, so that the ways were bad. Now, as we rode along—Mr.

Penne and I—side by side, and his servant behind, armed with a blunderbuss, our conversation was grave, turning chiefly on the imprudence of the people in following Monmouth, when they should have waited for the gentry to lead the way. I found my companion (whom I held to be my benefactor) sober in manners and in conversation ; no drunkard ; no user of profane oaths ; and towards me, a woman whom he had (so to say) in his own power, he behaved always with the greatest ceremony and politeness. So that I hoped to have found in this good man a true protector.

When we reached Bristol he told me that, for my better safety, he would lodge me apart from his own house ; and so took me to a house in Broad-street, near St. John's Gate, where there was a most respectable old lady of grave aspect, though red in the cheeks.

‘ I have brought you, Madam,’ he said, ‘ to the house of a lady whose virtue and piety are well known.’

‘Sir,’ said the old lady, ‘this house is well known for the piety of those who use it. And everybody knows that you are all goodness.’

‘No,’ said Mr. Penne ; ‘no man is good. We can but try our best. In this house, however, Madam, you will be safe. I beg and implore you not at present to stir abroad, for reasons which you very well know. This good woman has three or four daughters in the house, who are sometimes, I believe, merry’——

‘Sir,’ said the old lady, ‘children will be foolish.’

‘True, true,’ he replied laughing. ‘Take care, then, that they molest not Madam.’

‘No, Sir ; they shall not.’

‘Then, Madam, for the moment I leave you. Rest and be easy in your mind. I have, I think, contrived a plan which will answer your case perfectly.’

In the evening he returned and sent me word, very ceremoniously, that he desired the favour of a conversation with me. As if there

could be anything in the world that I desired more !

‘ Madam,’ he said, ‘ I have considered carefully your case, and I can find but one advice to give.’

‘ What is it, Sir ? ’

‘ We might,’ he went on, ‘ find a lodging for you in some quiet Welsh town across the Channel. At Chepstow, for instance, or at Newport, you might find a home for a while. But, the country being greatly inflamed with dissensions, there would everywhere be the danger of some fanatical busybody inquiring into your history—whence you came, why you left your friends—and so forth. And, again, in every town there are women (saving your presence, Madam) whose tongues tittle-tattle all day long. Short work they make of a stranger. So that I see not much safety in a small town. Then, again, you might find a farm-house where they would receive you ; but your case is not that you wish to be hidden for a time, as one implicated in the Monmouth business. Not so ; you desire to

be hidden all your life, or for the whole life of the man who, if he finds you, may compel you to live with him, and to live for—how long? Sixty years, perhaps, in a dull and dirty farm-house, among rude boors, would be intolerable to a person of your manners and accomplishments.’

‘Then, Sir, in the name of Heaven’—for I began to be wearied with this lengthy setting up of plans only to pull them down again—‘what shall I do?’

‘You might go to London. At first I thought that London offered the best hope of safe retreat. There are parts of London where the gentlemen of the robe are never seen, and where you might be safe. Thus, about the eastern parts of the city there are never any lawyers at all. There you might be safe. But yet—it would be a perpetual risk. Your face, Madam, if I may say so, is one which will not be quickly forgotten when it hath once been seen—you would be persecuted by would-be lovers; you would go in continual terror, knowing that one you

fear was living only a mile away from you. You would have to make up some story, to maintain which would be troublesome ; and presently the time would come when you would have no more money. What, then, would you do ? ’

‘ Pray, Sir, if you can, tell me what you think I should do, since there are so many things that I cannot do. ’

‘ Madam, I am going to submit to you a plan which seems to me at once the safest and the best. You have, you tell me, cousins in the town of Boston, which is in New England. ’

‘ Yes, I have heard my father speak of his cousins. ’

‘ I have myself visited that place, and have heard mention of certain Eykins as gentlemen of substance and reputation. I propose, Madam, that you should go to these cousins, and seek a home among them. ’

‘ Leave England ? You would have me leave this country and go across the ocean to America ? ’

‘That is my advice. Nay, Madam’—he assumed a most serious manner—‘do not reject this advice suddenly; sleep upon it. You are not going among strangers, but among your own people, by whom the name of your pious and learned father is doubtless held in great honour. You are going from a life (at best) of danger and continual care to a place where you will be certainly free from persecution. Madam, sleep upon it.’

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON BOARD THE 'JOLLY THATCHER.'



awake all night thinking of this plan. The more I thought upon it, the more I was pleased with it. To fly from the country was to escape the pursuit of my husband, who would never give over looking for me because he was so obstinate and masterful. I should also escape the reproaches of my lover, Robin, and break myself altogether from a passion which was now (through my own rashness) become sinful. I might

also break myself from the loathing and hatred which I now felt towards my wicked husband, and might even, in time and after much prayer, arrive at forgiving him. At that time—yea, and for long afterwards—I did often surprise myself in such a fit of passion as, I verily believe, would have made me a murderess had opportunity or the Evil One sent that man my way. Yea, not once or twice, but many times have I thus become a murderess in thought and wish and intention—I confess this sin with shame, though I have long since repented of it. To have been so near unto it—nay, to have already committed it in my imagination—covers me with shame. And now when I sometimes (my Lord, the master of my affections, doth allow it) visit the Prison of Ilchester and find therein some poor wretch who hath yielded to temptation and sudden wrath (which is the possession by the Devil), and so hath committed what I only imagined, my heart goes forth to that poor creature, and I cannot rest until I have prayed with her and softened her heart, and left her

to go contrite to the shameful tree. Nay, since, as you shall hear, I have been made to pass part of my life among the most wicked and profligate of my sex, I am filled with the thought that the best of us are not much better than the worst, and that the worst of us are in some things as good as the best; so that there is no room for pride and self-sufficiency, but much for humiliation and distrust of one's own heart.

Well, if I would consent to fly from the country across the seas, I should find kith and kin who would shelter me. There should I learn to think about other things—poor wretch! as if I could ever forget the village—and Robin! Oh! that I should have to try—even to try—to forget Robin! I was to learn that though the skies be changed the heart remains the same.

How I fled—and whither—you shall now hear.

Mr. George Penne came to see me next morning, sleek and smiling and courteous.

‘Madam,’ he said, ‘may I know your decision, if you have yet arrived at one?’

‘Sir, it is already made. I have slept upon it ; I have prayed upon it ; I will go.’

‘That is well. It is also most opportune, because a ship sails this very day. It is most opportune, I say—even Providential. She will drop down the Channel with the coming tide. You will want a few things for the voyage.’

‘It will be winter when we arrive, and the winters in that country are cold : I must buy some thicker clothing. Will there be any gentlewoman on board?’

‘Surely’—he smiled—‘surely. There will be, I am told, more than one gentlewoman on board that ship. There will be, in fact, a large and a cheerful company. Of that you may be assured. Well, since that is settled, a great load of care is removed, because I have heard that your husband rode into Taunton with Judge Jeffreys ; that he learned from someone—I know not from whom—of your presence in the town, and of your departure with me.’

‘It must have been the market-woman.’

‘Doubtless, the market-woman’—I have often asked myself whether this was a falsehood or not—‘and he is even now speeding towards Bristol hoping to find you. Pray Heaven that he hath not learned with whom you fled!’

‘Oh!’ I cried. ‘Let us go on board the ship at once! Let us hasten!’

‘Nay; there is no hurry for a few hours. But stay within-doors. Everything that is wanting for the voyage shall be put on board for you. As for your meals, you will eat with’—here he paused for a moment—‘with the rest of the company under the care of the Captain. For your berth, it will be as comfortable as can be provided. Next, as to the money. You have, I understand, two hundred pounds and more?’

I took the bag from my waist and rolled out the contents. There were in all two hundred and forty-five pounds and a few shillings. The rest had been expended at Ilminster.

He counted it carefully, and then replaced the money in the bag.

‘The Eykins of Boston, in New England,’ he said, ‘are people of great credit and substance. There will be no necessity for you to take with you this money, should you wish it to be expended to the advantage of your brother and your friends.’

‘Take it all, kind Sir. Take it all, if so be it will help them in their need.’

‘Nay, that will not do, either,’ he replied, smiling, his hand still upon the bag. ‘For, first, the Captain of your ship must be paid for his passage ; next, you must not go among strangers (though your own kith and kin) with no money at all in purse. Therefore, I will set aside (by your good leave) fifty pounds for your private purse. So : fifty pounds. A letter to my correspondent at Boston, which I will write, will cause him to pay you this money on your landing. This is a safer method than to carry the money in a bag or purse, which may be stolen. But if the letter be lost, another can be written. We merchants, indeed, commonly send three such letters of advice in case of shipwreck and loss

of the bags. This done, and the expenses of the voyage provided, there remains a large sum, which judiciously spent, will, I think, insure for your friends from the outset the treatment reserved for prisoners of distinction who can afford to pay—namely, on their arrival they will be bought (as it is termed) by worthy merchants, who (having been previously paid by me) will suffer them to live where they please, without exacting of them the least service or work. Their relatives at home will forward them the means of subsistence, and so their exile will be softened for them. If you consent thereto, Madam, I will engage that they shall be so received, with the help of this money.'

If I consented, indeed ! With what joy did I give my consent to such laying out of my poor Barnaby's money ! Everything now seemed turning to the best, thanks to my new and benevolent friend.

At his desire, therefore, I wrote a letter to Barnaby recommending him to trust himself, and to advise Robin and Humphrey to trust

themselves, entirely to the good offices of this excellent man. I informed him that I was about to cross the seas to our cousins in New England, in order to escape the clutches of the villain who had betrayed me. And then I told him how his money had been bestowed, and bade him seek me when he should be released from the Plantations (wherever they might send him) at the town of Boston among his cousins. The letter Mr. Penne faithfully promised to deliver. (*Nota bene.*—The letter was never given to Barnaby.)

At the same time he wrote a letter for me to give to his correspondent at Boston, telling me that on reading that letter his friend would instantly pay me the sum of fifty pounds.

Thus was the business concluded, and I could not find words, I told him, to express the gratitude which I felt for so much goodness towards one who was a stranger to him. I begged him to suffer me to repay at least the charges to which he had been put at the inns and the stabling since he took me into his own care and protection. But he would take

nothing. 'Money,' he said, 'as payment for such services as he had been enabled to render would be abhorrent to his nature. Should good deeds be bought? Was it seemly that a merchant of credit should sell an act of common Christian charity?'

'What!' he asked, 'are we to see a poor creature in danger of being imprisoned if she is recognised—and of being carried off against her will by a husband whom she loathes, if he finds her—are we to see such a woman and not be instantly fired by every generous emotion of compassion and indignation to help that woman at the mere cost of a few days' service and a few guineas spent?'

I was greatly moved—even to tears—at these words and at all this generosity, and I told him that I could not sufficiently thank him for all he had done, and that he should have my prayers always.

'I hope I may, Madam,' he said, smiling strangely. 'When the ship hath sailed you will remember, perhaps, the fate of Susan Blake, and, whatever may be your present

discomfort on board a rolling ship, say to yourself that this is better than to die in a noisome prison. You will also understand that you have fallen into the hands of a respectable merchant, who is much more lenient than Judge Jeffreys, and will not consent to the wasting of good commercial stuff in jails and on gibbets.'

'Nay, Sir,' I said, 'what doth all this mean?'

'Nothing, Madam : nothing. I was only anxious that you should say to yourself, "Thus and thus have I been saved from a jail. Such was Mr. Penne's humanity !"'

'Understand it ! Oh ! dear Sir, I repeat that my words are not strong enough to express my gratitude.'

'Now, Madam, no doubt, your gratitude runs high. Whether to-morrow'——

'Can I ever forget ? To-morrow ? To-morrow ? Surely, Sir'——

'Well, Madam, we will wait until to-morrow. Meantime, lie snug and still all day, and in the afternoon I will come for you. Two

hundred and forty-five pounds—'tis not a great sum, but a good day's work—a good day's work, added to the satisfaction of helping a most unfortunate young gentlewoman—most unfortunate.'

What did the good man mean by still talking of the morrow ?

At half-past twelve the good woman of the house brought me a plate of meat and some bread.

'So,' she said—her face was red and I think she had been drinking—'he hath determined to put you on board with the rest, I hear.'

'Hush! If you have heard, say nothing.'

'He thinks he can buy my silence. Come, Madam ; though, indeed, some would rather take their chance with Judge Jeffreys—they say he is a man who can be moved by the face of a woman—than with—well, as for my silence, there—— It is usual, Madam, to compliment the landlady, and though, I confess, you are not of the kind which do com-

monly frequent this house yet one may expect'——

'Alas ! my good woman, I have nothing. Mr. Penne has taken all my money.'

'What ! you had money ? And you gave it to Mr. Penne ? You gave it to him ? Nay, indeed—why, in the place where thou art going'——

She was silent, for suddenly we heard Mr. Penne's step outside ; and he opened the door.

'Come,' he said roughly ; 'the Captain says that he will weigh anchor in an hour : the tide serves—come.'

I hastened to put on my hat and mantle.

'Farewell,' I said, taking the old woman's hand. 'I have nothing to give thee but my prayers. Mr. Penne, who is all goodness, will reward thee for thy kindness to me.'

'He all goodness ?' asked the old woman. 'He ? Why, if there is upon the face of the whole earth'——

'Come, Child !' Mr. Penne seized my hand and dragged me away.

'The woman,' he said, 'hath been drinking. It is a bad habit she hath contracted of late. I must see into it, and speak seriously to her : but a good nature at heart. Come, we must hasten. You will be under the special care of the Captain. I have provided a box full of warm clothing and other comforts. I think there is nothing omitted that may be of use. Come.'

He hurried me along the narrow streets until we came to a quay, where there were a great number of ships, such as I had never before seen. On one of them the sailors were running about clearing away things, coiling ropes, tossing sacks and casks aboard, with such a 'Yo-hoing !' and noise as I never in my life heard before.

' 'Tis our ship,' said Mr. Penne. Then he led me along a narrow bridge, formed by a single plank, to the deck of the ship. There stood a gentleman of a very fierce and resolute aspect, armed with a sword, hanging from a scarlet sash, and a pair of pistols in his

belt. 'Captain,' said Mr. Penne, 'are all aboard ?'

'Ay ; we have all our cargo. And a pretty crew they are ! Is this the last of them ? Send her for'ard.'

'Madam,' said Mr. Penne, 'suffer me to lead you to a place where, until the ship sails and the officers have time to take you to your cabin, you can rest and be out of the way. It is a rough assemblage, but at sailing one has no choice.'

Gathered in the forepart of what they call the waist there was a company of about a hundred people. Some were young, some old ; some were men, some women ; some seemed mere children. All alike showed in their faces the extreme of misery, apprehension, and dismay.

'Who are these ?' I asked.

'They will tell you themselves presently. Madam, farewell.' With that Mr. Penne left me standing among this crowd of wretches, and, without waiting for my last words of gratitude, hurried away immediately.

I saw him running across the plank to the quay. Then the boatswain blew a shrill whistle ; the plank was shoved over ; some ropes were cast loose, and the ship began slowly to move down the river with the tide, now beginning to run out, and a wind from the north-east.

I looked about me. What were all these people ? Why were they going to New England ? Then, as the deck was now clearer and the sailors, I suppose, at their stations, I ventured to walk towards the afterpart of the ship with the intention to ask the Captain for my cabin. As I did so, a man stood before me armed with a great cane, which he brandished, threatening, with a horrid oath, to lay it across my back if I ventured any further aft.

‘ Prisoners, for’ard ! ’ he cried. ‘ Back you go, or—by the Lord ’——

‘ Prisoner ? ’ I said. ‘ I am no prisoner. I am a passenger.’

‘ Passenger ? Why, as for that, you are all passengers.’

‘All ? Who are these, then ?’

He informed me with plainness of speech who and what they were—convicts taken from the prisons, branded in the hand, and sentenced to transportation.

‘But I am a passenger,’ I repeated. ‘Mr. Penne hath paid for my passage to New England. He hath paid the Captain’——

‘The ship is bound for Barbadoes, not New England. ’Tis my duty not to stir from this spot ; but here’s the Mate—tell him.’

This was a young man, armed, like the Captain, with pistols and sword.

‘Sir,’ I said, ‘I am a passenger brought on board by Mr. Penne, by whom my passage hath been paid to New England.’

‘By Mr. George Penne, you say ?’

‘The same. He hath engaged a cabin for me, and hath purchased clothes—and’——

‘Is it possible,’ said the Mate, ‘that you do not know where you are, and whither you are going ?’

‘I am going, under the special care of the Captain, to the city of Boston, in New Eng-

land, to my cousin. Mr. Eykin, a gentleman of credit and substance of that town.'

He gazed at me with wonder.

'I will speak to the Captain,' he said, and left me standing there.

Presently he returned. 'Come with me,' he said.

'You are Alice Eykin?' said the Captain, who had with him a paper from which he read.

'That is my name.'

'On a certain day in July, your father being a preacher in the army of the Duke of Monmouth, you walked with a procession of girls bearing flags which you presented to that rebel?'

'It is true, Sir.'

'You have been given by the King to some great Lord or other, I know not whom, and by him sold to the man Penne, who hath put you on board this ship, the 'Jolly Thatcher,' Port of London, to be conveyed, with a hundred prisoners, all rogues and thieves, to the Island of Barbadoes, where you will presently

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Then, indeed, the Captain before me seemed to reel about, and I fell fainting at his feet.

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